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MASTER MARTIN

EMMA MARSHALL

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MASTER MARTIN

SIR THEODORE AND MASTER MARTIN.—*Page* 74.

Frontispiece.

MASTER MARTIN

BY

EMMA MARSHALL

AUTHOR OF

"THE CLOSE OF ST. CHRISTOPHER'S," "SILVER CHIMES,"
"SIR BENJAMIN'S BOUNTY," ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

PHILADELPHIA

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	MASTER MARTIN	1
II.	SURPRISES	12
III.	MASTER MARTIN HAS A VISITOR	24
IV.	THE STORY CIRCULATES	36
V.	THE TUTOR	48
VI.	THE TUTOR MAKES FRIENDS	58
VII.	IN THE HOUSE ON WHEELS	70
VIII.	RESCUE	83
IX.	A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST	95
X.	A NEW BROOM	106
XI.	MASTER MARTIN'S SEARCH	117
XII.	RESTORED	129

MASTER MARTIN

CHAPTER I

MASTER MARTIN

TWICE a year a van covered with baskets and brooms, straw chairs and cradles, passed through the village of Knapton, in Norfolk, a remote village in a remote corner of that eastern county, where the keen east wind brings health and vitality to those who can bear its strong breath, but withers those who are weak and feeble as it rushes past them or finds its way into their houses.

But there was no east in the balmy air of the early May-day when Mrs. Curtis's basket-waggon or van was slowly passing through the sequestered lanes, where the primroses studded the banks, and through the trees of the copses which bordered the road the blue hyacinths were bending their graceful heads, and the wild anemones

yet lingered in patches in fluttering companies of fragile loveliness.

Mrs. Curtis was a buxom woman of forty or fifty. I dare not tell you her age, for she never allowed any one to know it. It was a peculiarity of Mrs. Curtis, which perhaps some people you know may share; and I think, if you ask me, every one is at liberty to say, in answer to impertinent inquiries, "I am as old as I look, and let that be enough."

Mrs. Curtis, I am bound to say, had some reason for not revealing her age, for she had taken to herself a very small and very young-looking husband, who might, judging by appearance, have been her son. But, as we all know, appearances are deceitful.

Mr. Curtis, or Tim, as his wife always called him, was meek and unoffending, and one might almost think that he had taken the wrong vow when he married Mrs. Curtis! For he it was who added obedience to love and honour, and who very seldom dreamed of opposing Mrs. Curtis's will. Mr. Curtis generally walked beside the waggon, while Mrs. Curtis sat at the door of her movable house on wheels.

Through mire and mud, in rain and shine, Mr. Curtis patiently plodded, till they reached

a village or a roadside hamlet, when his wife would come down the steps of the van, and, taking a handful of her wicker-wares, offered them for sale, driving a good bargain, while her husband was apt to let the things go, as she said, for a brass farthing!

This house on wheels was kept beautifully neat and tidy. Indeed, Mrs. Curtis took a great pride in the interior of her little dwelling. The wooden walls were ornamented with Christmas cards and "little picters," as she called them, in gilt frames. There was not wall-space enough to hang any large picture, except in one place, and that was the door opening from the living room into the bedroom, where Sir John Millais' "Bubbles" hung, and swung as the door opened or shut, and was the joy of Mrs. Curtis's heart. "Bubbles" had a story; for, in the far, far past, when Mrs. Curtis was young and never cared to hide her age, there was a little boy—dear to her heart—who, seen through the haze of years, seemed to her to resemble "Bubbles."

"If it costs a fortune," she had said to Tim, "I must buy that picture;" and buy it she did, and every day dusted it and bid "Bubbles" good-morning, and every night bid him good-night before she closed the door and vanished into her

little bedroom, where her portly person left her husband but a small corner, so that it was fortunate that he was so thin and spare as only to want a narrow space in which to sleep.

The basket-waggon was really a very cosy home, and if it was sometimes pervaded by an "osiery" smell and was a little stuffy in hot weather, it was a marked contrast to the movable dwellings of gipsies and tinkers, of shows and travelling circuses, which it often passed on its way.

Mrs. Curtis was supposed by the other inhabitants of houses on wheels to be proud and stuck up. And if she "passed a good-morning" to any of the slatternly women who happened to be stationed for the night in the neighbourhood, they said it was as if they were "dirt under her feet." A simile which, as far as the dirt is concerned, had a good deal of truth in it.

Mrs. Curtis had very little tolerance for untidy ways, and she was, like her house—the pink of cleanliness.

The arrival of Mrs. Curtis and her baskets and brooms was an event in Knapton. The children ran into the cottages to announce the fact to their mothers, and there was always an expectant group in the market-place when it was

rumoured that Curtis's van was approaching. Mrs. Curtis knew her best customers, and felt pretty sure who would want a cradle or little chair, or what she called "fancy goods."

Some of them were very pretty—work-baskets with open-work handles, tables with Vandyke edges, and garden-chairs with patterns made in the seat and back with rushes twisted in and out with the straw. There were "butter-baskets" made of very coarse strong osier, and hampers of brown twigs, which were piled up in what Mrs. Curtis called a nest, one inside the other, the largest ones outside, and the smallest the last to come out.

There was a general interchange of greetings between Mrs. Curtis and her customers.

"How well you do look, Mrs. Curtis, to be sure! and——"

"I may say the same of you, Mrs. Press. What can I do for you to-day? You were wanting a mat when I was here last autumn. Here, Tim, look sharp and pass down these mats with the red edge. Lor, don't you want one now, Mrs. Press? That's a pity, but I can show you them all the same."

The owner of the "Jolly Huntsman" now passed the group, and the less important inhabitants of

the village made way for him. He had a magnificent order—two garden-chairs for the bowling-green, and a table, a washing-basket, and two hampers.

While much haggling was going on, and attempts to beat down Mrs. Curtis—who entirely refused to be beaten down—the children on the outskirts of the little crowd began to raise a cry of—"Here's Master Martin! here's Master Martin! What have you done to your legs, Master Martin? They are like crooked sticks. Old Crooked Sticks—Old——"

The person thus greeted by gibes and jeers now came with a nest of coarse baskets at his back, and with a stout stick in his hand, on which he leaned heavily. As he walked he laid about him with fury. But his aimless blows were skilfully avoided by the little urchins, and Master Martin, feeling he was powerless to cope with them, contented himself with glowering at them from under his beetling eyebrows, and muttering that he would give them a hiding when he had the chance.

"Why, here's Master Martin, I declare," Mrs. Curtis said in her cheery, pleasant voice, as the poor little man trudged up to the van with the hampers at his back. "Well, I am afraid I

don't want any rough baskets to-day. See," Mrs. Curtis said, pointing to the roof of the van, "there is a lot still hanging there."

"These are very good strong ones, ma'am. I'd be glad to sell them."

"Well," Mrs. Curtis said, relenting, and putting her hand into the capacious pocket of her white apron, and rattling the coins there as she did so, "what do you ask, Master Martin, for the lot?"

"What you please to give," was the reply. "I've had a hardish winter—six full weeks of it with rheumatics."

"Oh, well, here's half-a-crown for the lot. Put them down, Master Martin, and, Tim, count them out."

"There's half-a-dozen, ma'am, and thank you kindly."

One big bully in the crowd began to laugh, and said in an undertone to one of his companions, "Old Crooked Sticks has made a good bargain."

"What's that you are saying, you young rascal?" Master Martin said in great wrath. "I'll have at you."

A mocking laugh was the reply, as the boy scuttled off down the village.

"It's a crying shame how they tease the poor fellow," Mrs. Curtis said, as the little old man limped away.

"It's only that set led on by Ted Cross," a woman standing by said. "He is a plague to the village, and I only wish we could get rid of him; he sets the boys up to mischief. Why, here's the little Squire coming, I declare."

And now the crowd collected round the van dispersed, or rather moved aside, as a fair-haired child of seven or eight years old, attended by a respectable woman, known in Knapton as Mrs. Longhurst, came up to Mrs. Curtis.

"How do you do?" the boy said, taking off his cap, as he would have done to the Rector's wife, or to the grand Lady Burroughes who lived at Sandilands Lodge. "How do you do, Mrs. Curtis? I am very well, thank you! I am come to buy a little weenie basket for Nana, and a big one for myself, to take down to the beach, you know, when I go to Overstrand. How much will the two come to? I hope not more than a shilling and two threepenny bits, which I have saved up on purpose to pay for them."

"Dear bless your little heart, Sir Theodore! You shall have the baskets, and welcome, for what you choose to pay for them."

"Oh, thank you," the child said, shaking his head; "but I wish to pay what every one else would pay—not less, you know. Nana wants a little basket to hold her reels of cotton. Don't you, Nana?"

"No, my dear—not for you to buy it for me. Get your own basket. Look, that is a beauty, with a good strong handle, for you to carry down to the beach."

"How much is it?"

Mrs. Curtis made a sign to her husband, who had the basket in his hand.

"Just one shilling, sir; and this little basket is sixpence."

"Oh, then my money is enough," little Sir Theodore said joyfully. "Two threepenny bits make sixpence. Here is the money, Mrs. Curtis, and thank you."

"It's I that am very thankful to you, sir. And pray, how is the old lady at the Hall?"

"My grandmother is not very well, thank you; she cannot go out, which is a pity, isn't it?" And then, again raising his cap, and holding out his small hand to Mrs. Curtis, who took it in her large fat one as if it were something likely to break, little Sir Theodore Chamberlayne walked away carrying both his baskets with triumph.

Mrs. Curtis followed him with admiring looks.

"What a little gentleman he is, to be sure, and such pretty ways with him! It is a sad thing to think of him fatherless and motherless, and no one to play with, or nothing that a child should have."

"You tell me, Sue," Mr. Curtis ventured to say, "I cheapen the articles; but it's you this time. That big basket was eighteenpence, and the little one, with the fancy edge, a shilling."

"And if they were, what is that to you, pray? Now we'll move higher up the village; we've done the business here."

The old horse got a mysterious sound from Tim, shook his shabby mane, and slowly dragged the van along — baskets and brooms and all the chairs and tables creaking as they swung to and fro, while "Bubbles," within the van, sat immovable, looking up at his magnificent globes, which, unlike the fairy globes blown by many a rosy mouth like his, did not vanish into nothingness, but remained suspended above his head, and were the constant admiration of Mrs. Curtis, who used to say they were as natural as if they were just blown from the pipe.

Little Sir Theodore had a small altercation with his Nana at the place where four roads

met. "I wish to go round by the heatn, if you please, Nana?"

"It will make us late, my dear, and her ladyship will be angry with me."

"No; she will only be angry with *me*, Nana. Do, do come; I want so very much to see that little old man again, and I should like to speak to him."

"I don't think your grandmamma would approve of your talking to the old man, my dear."

"Oh dear!" poor little Theodore sighed. "Grannie does not approve of nothing and no one. It is a great pity, Nana."

CHAPTER II

SURPRISES

MASTER MARTIN was well used to the gibes and jeers of some of the Knapton boys, but to-day he limped away more slowly than usual to his cottage on the heath. He had built this house himself some years before this time.

It had originally been a hut, lived in by a shepherd, and then used for a shelter in bad weather, and where he kept a few hurdles and water-troughs for the sheep in the winter.

But the roof had fallen in, and it was altogether in a most dilapidated condition when Master Martin, wandering over the moor from Gimingham, took refuge there in a heavy storm of rain, and, throwing down the bundle and old carpet-bag which contained all his worldly goods, took possession of it, and set to work to make it inhabitable.

He was very much bent with rheumatism, and his legs were twisted, and his head was much too

large for his body. But his fingers were useful and skilful, and very soon he had covered in the roof of the hut with furze branches from the moor, laid in rows with turf between them, and patched up the walls with mortar made by himself with mud, which was mixed with sand and chalk, and served to fill the spaces between the rough-hewn stones of which the hut was built.

There was a great deal of ingenuity shown in making this poor place habitable, and it had stood the storms and heavy snow and rains of many winters—of more winters than had passed over the head of little Sir Theodore Chamberlayne, who had not yet reached his eighth birthday.

His was a lonely childhood, passed with his grandmother. Both his parents were dead, and he knew none of the delights of a house full of brothers and sisters. Of course this life made him what his grandmother's housekeeper called him, "an old-fashioned little mortal."

But nurse would rejoin, "It's a very good fashion, if it's an old one; for a better child than Sir Theodore never lived, bless him!"

"He wants play-fellows, and to be stirred up a bit; but it's no use talking to you, Mrs. Longhurst.

You don't seem to mind having the child, and a little baronet, too, brought up unbefitting his station."

These conversations in his grandmother's servants' hall were very frequent, and always ended in Mrs. Longhurst leaving it in wrathful indignation that any fault should be found with her darling.

She very seldom crossed Sir Theodore's will, though she made faint attempts to do so, as she did to-day when he wanted to go home by the longest way, that he might go past Master Martin's cottage and speak to him.

"Didn't that big boy, Nana, call Master Martin 'Old Crooked Legs?' He was very unkind, and I should so like to speak to him."

But when at last Sir Theodore had reached the cottage, his courage failed him, for Master Martin looked anything but agreeable as he squatted on the turf-bench he had made just outside his door.

A small strip of garden—if garden it could be called—was in front of the cottage, surrounded with a paling of sticks set at irregular intervals. A gap was left in them, and a bit of rope did duty for a gate, hooked across from the point of one stick to another. It was hooked across now, and

"How are you to-day, Master Martin?"—*Page* 15.

Sir Theodore stood irresolute, but at last said, "How are you to-day, Master Martin?"

A grunt was the answer, and Nana said, "Come away, my dear! come away!"

But Theodore was not discouraged.

"You have got a nice little house, Master Martin; I should so like to come in and see it."

Still no reply, but a grunt even more defiant than the first, as Master Martin picked up a coarse fisherman's net and began to draw the big bone netting-needle through on a piece of flat wood which served for a mesh.

"I wish I could work like that; and you make baskets too, don't you? I have just bought these two baskets from Mrs. Curtis. They are very nice baskets. Did you make them?"

"No;" and then for the first time Master Martin looked straight at the little speaker.

The sweet, innocent face, with its setting of golden curls, the wistful glance of the deep blue eyes, the rosy lips, and cheeks like the delicate pink and white of the apple-blossoms in the orchards in May, seemed to arrest Master Martin's attention.

Something like a smile played over his rugged features, and he said—

"What makes you come peering and peeping

here, eh? To poke fun at my crooked legs, eh?"

"Oh no, no!" the child said. "I wished to speak to you because I thought—I thought those boys were very, very rude to you, and I felt sorry. I'll call again another day, if Nana will let me, and bring you a book I am very fond of, with a pretty picture in it. Good-bye, Master Martin."

"Good-day, young 'un," was the reply; and Nana took Sir Theodore's hand, saying—

"It won't do for you to talk to that surly old man; he is enough to frighten any one. I shall not come round this way any more. He is a scarecrow. And the notion of his calling you 'young 'un.' The impudence of the man!"

But Sir Theodore said—

"I am glad I told him I was sorry for him—*very* glad;" and then he ran on before Nana with his baskets, eager to show them to his particular friend in his grandmother's household, Dolly, the under-housemaid, who waited on Mrs. Longhurst and cleaned the nurseries.

The white gate of the hall stood wide open, and as Theodore ran up the drive he saw the marks of carriage-wheels, which were so unusual that he ran back to Nana, who said—

"There's been a carriage. Dear heart! I hope

it isn't the doctor; but he always goes to the back."

No, it was not the doctor; for a carriage with post-horses was standing at the door, and the footman was talking to Dennis, the old butler, in a very earnest way.

Nana was very curious, but she knew better than to pass in at the front door, especially when Dennis stood there.

She always went in at the back-entrance with Sir Theodore, as the stair leading to their part of the house was reached from the passage by the housekeeper's room.

"Who is here, Mrs. Barker? There is a carriage with post-horses at the door."

"It's a gentleman and a little boy—posted all the way from Norwich—so James says. They'll stay to luncheon, I make no doubt, and there's nothing but plain fare for them."

"A little boy!" Sir Theodore caught at the words. "I should like to see him, Nana. I wonder what he is like?"

"Well, make haste upstairs, and let me get you ready, for the first gong has sounded, and if there is company in the dining-room, I must change your suit.

"I shall show him my baskets," Sir Theodore

said, "and lend him mine if he wants to go down to the beach at Overstrand."

Full of curiosity, but with no awkward shyness, little Sir Theodore, in his velvet suit and deep lace collar, went into the dining-room at the sound of the second gong.

No one was there, but after waiting two or three minutes at his place by the table, Theodore's grandmother came in, leaning on a gentleman's arm, and followed by a boy in a rough grey suit, with a quantity of short curling brown hair and rosy cheeks.

"This is Theodore, Mr. Harrison," Lady Chamberlayne said. "Come and speak to Mr. Harrison, Theodore." And Theodore advanced, and held his small hand stretched out by way of greeting as he said, just as he had said to Mrs. Curtis—

"I am very well, thank you," anticipating the question, which in this case was not asked.

Theodore then went round the table to the boy.

"How do you do? I am quite well, thank you."

The boy looked at little Theodore from head to foot.

"Why, you look like a girl," he said. "What a lark!"

Theodore was conscious that his greeting in either case had not been well received. But he turned quickly away and took his accustomed seat at the table, his cheeks a little flushed. He folded his small hands and said his grace just as if the strangers had not been present.

A great change came now into little Sir Theodore's life, just as unexpectedly as changes come into the lives of most people, boys and girls and grown-up people alike.

Mr. Harrison was left by Theodore's father his guardian, and he was also the guardian of the boy with the curly hair, who was also an orphan. Mr. Harrison thought, and perhaps justly, that Theodore wanted the companionship of a boy about his own age, and he had come to Knapton to make arrangements for Robin Prescott to be his companion, and the two boys were to have a tutor and have their lessons together.

This all happened as Mr. Harrison suggested, or rather settled, for he was a masterful person; and Lady Chamberlayne having no one to consult, and being too indolent to exert herself in any way about her grandson, it was perhaps as well that Mr. Harrison should be able to settle matters for her, which she could not settle for herself.

If the world had been searched, a greater contrast could not have been found than that which was to be seen between Robin Prescott and Theodore Chamberlayne.

This did not concern Mr. Harrison, if he thought about it at all. He thought Theodore was a little milksop, and that it was time he should know what other boys were like, and have some one about him of a different sort to Mrs. Longhurst.

There can be no doubt that the change was a necessary one, but it was brought about without much consideration for the feelings of the little delicate child, who, with a natural refinement and a sensitive nature, shrank from the rough-and-ready manners of his new companion.

And the change at the Hall brought undeniable changes in the cottage. It became known in the village that a boy was wanted to look after the new pony which had arrived for the young gentleman to ride.

Mrs. Press was very anxious that her boy should succeed in getting the place; so was Mrs. Cross.

The two boys were about the same age and ready for work, as both had reached the age when they could leave school.

Of the two, Mrs. Press's son was the smaller

and more delicate-looking, while Ted Cross was big and strong, and had a pleasant way of speaking when he liked. But he was known to be the ringleader of mischief in the village, and again and again he had been nearly dismissed from the school for misconduct.

Both mothers were set upon their boys getting the place at the Hall—to do sundry odd jobs in the stableyard for the coachman and groom, and to go out with the pony which had just been sent to Knapton, having been bought at the spring fair at Norwich, and chosen by Mr. Harrison for the use of his little ward, Sir Theodore Chamberlayne.

Mrs. Cross was a big overbearing woman, while Mrs. Press was quiet and gentle. They had both been up to the Hall with their boys, whose faces had been scrubbed till they shone like rosy apples, and their hair brushed and discreetly damped to keep it smooth.

Mrs. Cross was not at all well pleased to find Mrs. Press had been before her at the Hall. She had not received a definite answer, for the matter could not be decided till Mr. Harrison's next visit.

Mrs. Cross was loud in her praise of Ted while in the presence of the butler and housekeeper at

the Hall, who gave her an interview in the housekeeper's room.

"He was a good boy, and that strong, like his father before him, he could lift the pony if he tried; and he was one to work, and that clever with his books that learning was no trouble to him." It was a little strange that, having given Ted such a glowing character, Mrs. Cross had rated him all the way home—told him he was the plague of her life, and gave him a box on the ear; when he said—

"I thought I was the best boy who ever lived, mother. I heard you tell the lady so, and didn't I laugh in my sleeve! First time I ever heard you call me a good boy!" Then he began to whistle, and, tired of walking with his mother, leaped over a gate and began to give some sheep chase for the pleasure of seeing them frightened and run away with their lambs at their heels.

Mrs. Press was far too modest to praise her Jack. He had his faults, she had said, like every one else, but she had never known him tell her a lie, and since she had been left a widow, he did all he could for her. She said she should be thankful if he got into good service, and he could turn his hand to anything.

But, as the butler said, no decision could

be arrived at till Mr. Harrison's next visit—her ladyship could not be troubled; and so both mothers were dismissed with nothing definitely settled, and with the vision of their boys in smart livery with gilt buttons, still but a castle in the air.

CHAPTER III

MASTER MARTIN HAS A VISITOR

LITTLE Sir Theodore was a thoughtful child, and after Mr. Harrison's visit he sat perched up in the deep window-seat of his nursery, meditating on the change which was at hand.

What was a tutor? Would he be nice and kind, and, in short, be like Nana, and take him to the village, and to the beach for periwinkles and seaweed?

Then there was the boy. He felt, though he could not have put it into words, that Robin Prescott rather looked down on him.

"Am I like a girl?" he questioned Nurse.

"You are prettier than many a girl, if that is what you mean, my dear."

"Do you think the boy who came with the man from Norwich pretty, Nana?"

"Well, I scarcely saw him. Mr. Dennis said he was like a rough sort of ploughboy. I am sure I hope he won't trample on you, nor the

tutor neither;" and Nurse gave a prolonged sigh and said, "No changes were better than changes for the worse."

All this was very injudicious, to say the least of it, and did not tend to console little Sir Theodore.

He next tried his grandmother when he went down for the hour before her dinner, which he generally spent lying flat on the hearthrug, with his chin resting on his elbows and a book open before him.

"Grannie," he said, "when is the boy coming, and what is the tutor like?"

"Mr. Mackenzie and your little companion are to be here on Monday. I hope you will attend to all Mr. Mackenzie says, and be a good, obedient boy. It is quite time that you should have a companion, and some one to teach you. Longhurst has done her best, but you are too old now to be left to a nurse. My very indifferent health has prevented me from making the change sooner."

"I hope Mr. Mackenzie will go and see Master Martin."

"Master Martin! Who is that?"

"A poor, little old man, with crooked legs, who lives in a dear funny little house, just on the edge of the moor. I do so want to go into

the house and talk to him, but I have only got to the rope."

"The rope! What do you mean?"

"Why, you see, Grannie, there isn't exactly a gate, but two posts, with a rope tied across; and I just stood there and talked to him—to Master Martin, I mean."

"Oh, it is quite time you had some one to prevent you from gossiping with poor people."

"Why is it quite time?"

"Don't ask any more questions, Theodore; it tires me. Go on with your book."

This was always the end of Theodore's conversations with his grandmother, and he resigned himself to the inevitable.

But amongst many thoughts which were passing through his mind, two were prominent. The little old man in his hut, who was so lonely, and to whom the boys were so unkind; and the possibility of paying him a real visit without Nurse, and before Mr. Mackenzie and the new boy came.

"It is not very far," he thought. "I could soon get there, and no one need know. Would it be wrong, I wonder? I could run all the way, and take him one of these nice cakes Mrs. Barker sent up for my tea. Yes, I really will go to-morrow, for I do so want to see him again—he

looks so sad; and perhaps when the tutor comes he won't let me go."

After reading his Bible to Nurse, repeating his hymn, which he learned with wonderful ease, and writing in a copybook after the fashion of Mrs. Longhurst's youth, Sir Theodore was allowed, if it was fine, to go into the grounds round the Manor by himself with his hoop. So the next day, full of his scheme, he succeeded in getting two cakes from the nursery cupboard, and ran off in high spirits, his golden hair, which had perhaps suggested his likeness to a girl, flapping over the wide white collar of his blue serge sailor suit.

There was a spirit of enterprise in him this morning, but when the gate of the drive swung behind him, he felt a little overwhelmed with the gravity of the situation.

Many boys of his age are quite accustomed to run off to school alone, and probably would not understand the hesitation which made Theodore stand irresolute before he took the path across the moor which turned off from the road from Knapton. But the bright sunshine, the general joyfulness of the spring morning, which the larks were telling him over his head, the pair of white butterflies which danced before him, all seemed

to inspire him with courage, and away he ran, never looking back once, but holding the cakes carefully in the loose full blouse of his suit.

Presently the hut came in sight, and Theodore's heart beat fast. He slackened his pace as he got nearer to the palings with their pointed tops, and the two higher than the rest across which the rope was slung.

Nothing was to be seen of Master Martin at first, but Theodore loosened the rope and walked slowly up to the turf seat where he had seen Master Martin making the brown net. He stood at the open door with the light on his golden hair, the very picture of childish innocence, his large blue eyes wide open as they tried to pierce the gloom of the little hut.

Presently Master Martin, who was bending over a peat fire which sent out suffocating curls of thin smoke, turned and saw what seemed to him a vision at his door. He saw the golden hair, but the sweet child face was but dimly discerned. He stood with a stick in his hand, with which he had been stirring the sluggish embers of the fire.

"Master Martin," said a clear sweet voice, "I thought I should like to come and see you. May I come in?"

The muttered negative died on Master Martin's

lips as his visitor advanced timidly with the cakes in his hand.

"These are very nice cakes; will you please take them?"

Seeing Master Martin did not stretch out his hand to receive them, Theodore put them down on a rough apology for a table which stood against the wall.

"What made you come here, eh?"

"Well, I thought you were lonely, and—I was sorry."

Master Martin's large prominent eyes wore an expression which they had not worn for many a day. A softened wistful gaze was fastened on the child who made him these overtures of friendship.

"Lor," he said at last, "you'd better have stayed away; this ain't a place for you."

"Oh, but I think it is, and I will come again, if you will let me. I must not stay now, because Nurse does not know I have come. But I did so want to say that I hated to hear those boys calling after you—it was so rude, you know, and so unkind."

Master Martin was speechless. He only nodded his big head by way of assent, and Theodore went on—

"I am going to have a tutor now, and I shall tell him and the boy who is coming about you, and perhaps——"

"Don't tell 'em. I don't want 'em."

"Oh, very well. But may *I* come again?"

"You'll not come no more."

"Why not?"

"They won't let you. But"—Master Martin stopped—"but I am glad you did come this once —this *once*."

These few words made Theodore quite happy.

"I've made him glad," he said over and over to himself as he ran back over the moor. "I've made him glad—quite glad, poor old man. I know if I were he—if I were Master Martin—I should be glad to see any one who was kind, who meant to be kind to me. But oh! I am glad I am Theodore and not poor old Master Martin."

There was no guile in Theodore's nature, and when he got back, breathless and excited, to the nursery, he said—

"Oh, Nurse, I've been to see the little old man, and he was so pleased. I took him two cakes, and——"

"My dear, my dear! you would get me into a fine scrape if this was found out. You must never run off again—never."

"Never?" Theodore replied. "You won't mind if the tutor takes me or lets me go to see Master Martin?"

"No; it won't be my concern then," Nurse said sadly. "But we won't say any more about it now."

"I can't scold him, I can't," poor Nurse said. "He is the picture of his dear mamma, who was always thinking of the poor and the afflicted. No, I can't scold him, as I ought," she reflected when she left Theodore at the dining-room door, to take his dinner with his grandmother, and went herself to her own dinner in the servants' hall.

The question as to which boy would be chosen for the coveted place in the Manor was much discussed in the village of Knapton. The popular feeling was all in favour of Jack Press; and the schoolmaster, Mr. Bevan, and the old clergyman—who, truth compels me to say, did not know much about either of the boys—were entirely on his side.

"If only he is big enough and strong enough," was the only reservation which Mr. Bevan made.

"He is stronger than he looks, sir," Mrs. Press said; "but I wish the gentleman would make up his mind soon, for it's very unsettling; and there's

Farmer Hicks quite ready to take Johnnie on if so be he does not get the other place. It's very unkind of Mrs. Cross to go about taunting me with my boy's being small, and no more fit to groom a pony than he is to fly over the moon. If ever the old saying, 'Little and good,' was true, it's true of my Jack; and no one knows what a chap Ted Cross is, leastways the great folks at the Manor don't know. Mischievous is no word for him."

"Well, well! let us hope all will turn out for the best. You know I have said all I can in your boy's favour."

"I thank you, sir, I am sure," was Mrs. Press's reply, as she turned into her house.

Mrs. Cross was also lying in wait for Mr. Bevan.

"Good-morning, sir. There ain't any news from the great house, is there?"

"No; but I hear Mr. Harrison, Sir Theodore's guardian, is expected on Monday, and then we shall hear the decision."

Mr. Bevan was a little tired of these questions about the boys, and he added sharply—

"I only hope, if Ted is chosen, you will bid him do his best to give satisfaction. He will have to give up his monkey tricks if he wishes

to be a good servant. Good-morning," and before Mrs. Cross could rejoin, Mr. Bevan had gone into his own house and shut the door.

Both Johnnie Press and Ted Cross were the children of widows. Their fathers had been fishermen, and had been lost in one of the great storms which rage on the Norfolk coast in the spring and autumn.

Then the great German Ocean lifts up its voice, and huge, mountainous waves break with a crash like the roar of cannon on the ridge of pebbles which lie above the level sand, where happy children build their houses and dig their deep pools on summer days.

On this particular spring afternoon the sea was calm, flecked only by little crests of foam as it came to fill the pools on the low ledges of rock where the periwinkles lived, and the seaweed and sea-anemones spread out their fronds in the little clear pools of water between the rough bits of rock.

It was one of Sir Theodore's great delights to go to the beach with his nurse at low tide and gather periwinkles to take home for his tea in the nursery, to which his favourite Dolly was often invited.

If the boys and girls who read this story are

not Norfolk-born, they may never have enjoyed this quest for the little shellfish, which are called by the natives "pin-patches;" this name signifying that when they are cooked they can be got out of their shells by the aid of a stout pin.

A very homely feast these little periwinkles provided for Sir Theodore, but, as they were certified as perfectly wholesome by the old Doctor, who paid frequent visits to Lady Chamberlayne, Nurse was always ready to gratify Theodore, and a journey to the beach, on calm days, at low tide, was one of the great pleasures of Theodore's childhood.

"We shan't have many more winkle-hunts," Nurse said sadly.

"Why not?" the boy asked.

"It is not likely the tutor will care for pin-patches, my dear. He will be too grand for that."

Theodore would not spoil the present by melancholy anticipations. He ran gaily down over the smooth sand to the low-lying ridge of black rocks which the tide had left uncovered. He was sure of foot, and jumped lightly from one little crag to another, calling out to Nurse, "I've found lots —such big ones. I shall fill the basket."

"Take care you don't slip," Nurse said, who was cautiously approaching; "there's a lot of sea-

weed to-day;" and Theodore laughed merrily and skipped along till he came to a pool rather deeper than the rest—a crystal pool with a perfect garden of crimson seaweed waving in its clear depths, and a goodly number of periwinkles clinging to the side. Theodore stooped to gather them, and overbalancing himself, he fell into the water with a great splash, Nurse uttering a terrified cry as he disappeared.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY CIRCULATES

In less time than it takes me to write it, a boy had scampered over the rocks and pulled Sir Theodore out of the pool. He was, of course, drenched to the skin, and his fair hair was lying in wet masses all over his face and neck. He had lost his breath with the sudden splash in the pool head foremost, and although scarcely more than five feet in depth, it was deep enough to drown little Theodore if he had not been helped out.

He tried to say, "I—I am not hurt, Nurse; don't be so frightened. It is only"—then pathetically—"I wish I could see," for the wealth of golden hair in wet dripping masses bewildered him, and the salt water made his eyes smart.

"I must get you home as fast as I can," poor Nurse said, "but you'll catch your death of cold," she added, wringing the water out of Theodore's hair, and trying to raise him in her arms.

"If you please, ma'am," Theodore's deliverer said, who was following Nurse and her burden to the sand, "I'll carry the little gentleman. That's my mother's cottage by the boat-house. She will dry the little master's clothes if you like."

"Well," Nurse said, as she tottered under Theodore's weight, "it won't be a bad plan, for I've got such a palpitation in my heart. I never was so frightened in my life."

Then, quite overcome, Nurse burst into tears and resigned Theodore into Johnnie Press's arms, who made for his mother's cottage with quick, sure strides.

Theodore had regained his voice now, and said, "I don't think I thanked you for pulling me out, did I?"

"That's all right, sir; there's nothing to thank for. I am glad you are all right."

Mrs. Press was busy ironing in the back-kitchen when Johnnie's call brought her to see what was the matter.

"Dear heart!" she exclaimed, "what has happened? You look as if you were drownded. Why, it's little Sir Theodore!"

"I am not drownded, thank you," Theodore said, out of politeness imitating Mrs. Press. "I

am rather wet, but I am not frightened now. You see, I fell head first into the water; that's how it was. I can't help my teeth chattering, and my hand shakes; but this is a very nice fire——"

"Get his wet things off him," Mrs. Press said to Nurse, "and don't give in. You should never give in, but bear up. That's what I've done since I was left a widow. I've said to myself, 'I must bear up.'"

This practical way of looking at what had happened seemed to give Mrs. Longhurst spirit. She dried her tears, and proceeded to undress Theodore and spread his clothes to dry before the peat fire, which, by the help of a few bits of drift-wood picked up on the beach, began to kindle into a blaze.

A blanket was brought from a bed upstairs, and Theodore was wrapped in it and put upon an old oak settle close to the hearth.

"I'll make him a cup of hot tea," Mrs. Press said. "Bless him! what a pretty boy he is!"

"If you please, Mrs. Press," Theodore said, "I would rather not be called pretty. Girls are pretty, and I am a boy, and boys are not pretty."

"What a clever little gentleman you are!" Mrs. Press said.

Her hopes were rising that, after these attentions to Sir Theodore, her Johnnie would be safe to get the coveted place at the great house.

But before the tea came Theodore's eyes had closed, and what with the shock of the sudden plunge into the water and the heat of the fire, he was too drowsy to keep awake, and slept peacefully in the corner of the settle, his hair twisted up into a knot by Nana, and his head resting on a cushion covered with a faded grey cretonne, which had been taken from a wooden arm-chair, where Nurse was now sitting turning the little shirt and sailor suit and knickerbockers before the fire.

There had been no witnesses of the accident, and it was not till Mrs. Cross came to the door to borrow a few bits of peat from Mrs. Press that the fact of Sir Theodore Chamberlayne being in Mrs. Press's cottage was known.

"Whatever's up now?" she said, pushing her head in at the door, where Johnnie was standing on guard. "Who have you got there?"

"That's no odds to you, Mrs. Cross. Shut the door, Johnnie."

"Well, that's manners, I must say;" and then Mrs. Cross left the door, but, standing on a hamper outside, peered in at the window.

"Well, I never! if there isn't the little baronet and that crabbed Mrs. Longhurst. Lor! the child is asleep and looks like death. How proud Mrs. Press will be. I expect that rascal Johnnie has pushed him into the water on purpose, and now will be acting as if he had saved him, just to get the place at the Hall. I see through it, I do; there's all the clothes drying, and Mrs. Press jabbering away and telling Mrs. Longhurst what a good boy hers is."

Having finished her inspection, which had not been noticed by those in the cottage, Mrs. Cross departed to spread the news amongst the gossips of the village, that little Sir Theodore was lying like death in Mrs. Press's cottage, and that Johnnie had shut the door in her face, and looked ashamed of himself—as well he might; for he had pushed Sir Theodore into the water off the rocks. She had seen Johnnie skulking about when she went up to the "Jolly Huntsman" for a pint of beer, and it was not the first time she had seen Mrs. Press's boy trying to bring himself into notice with the little baronet. She knew what he was after, and his mother too, but she would see to it that they didn't get what they wanted.

This false report, like other false reports, did

not lose in the telling of it, but soon magnified into a story, which went to show that Johnnie Press had pushed Sir Theodore into the sea under pretence of helping him to gather pin-patches, and it was pretty plain now that he would never get the place at the Hall, let his mother try ever so much.

It is extraordinary what delight people often show in listening to baseless rumours till they persuade themselves that they are true statements of fact. Before half-an-hour was over there was quite a little crowd of inquirers before Mrs. Press's cottage. The repeated taps at the door were answered by Johnnie, who always said that "Little Sir Theodore was all right, and was not a bit hurt;" but heads were shaken, and there were whispers and murmurs that it was all very fine, but time would prove.

Mrs. Cross, delighted with the success of her story, stood a little aloof, looking out for some one else whom she could move to wonder and pity for the "poor dear little gentleman, who was that delicate no one thought he could live to be a man."

She was soon gratified by the appearance of the doctor. She ran excitedly to stop his high gig, and said—

"Stop, sir; pray, sir, stop."

The doctor pulled up, and asked in a rough voice, "What's the matter? I am in a hurry."

"Oh, sir, it's the little baronet, who has been nearly drownded. He is in Press's cottage, and looks like death."

This was quite enough. The good doctor was out of his gig in a twinkling, and calling Ted Cross, who was hanging about eagerly drinking in the story his mother was telling about Johnnie Press, said—

"Here, boy, make yourself useful, and hold the horse's head while I go and find out what is amiss."

It was an immense relief to poor Mrs. Longhurst to see the doctor walk into the cottage. Theodore was still asleep, and his cheeks were flushed, and he murmured something about the pretty seaweed and the periwinkles.

"How did it happen?" the doctor asked.

"He fell into a pool on the rocks, sir, stooping over it to get periwinkles. He isn't hurt."

"No, that may be; but he is a delicate child, and the shock is bad for him."

The doctor's voice roused Theodore. He sat up and said—

"We had better go home now, Nana, hadn't we; it must be tea-time. Where are my things? Please dress me."

"Yes, my precious," Nurse said, "but we must wait till the things are dry."

"No, no," the doctor exclaimed; "bundle him up, Nurse, in the blanket, and I have a rug in the gig, and we'll get him home in a trice. The sooner the better. He must be put to bed and have a nice hot draught, and he will be as well as ever in the morning."

"I am quite well," Theodore said; "only my head feels rather funny. I think—I think——"

"Don't think about anything, my boy. Ah! I see there is a little bruise on his forehead."

"He must have knocked it against the rocks as he fell," Nana said. "Oh dear! to think after all these years this should happen when nothing has ever happened before since his dear mamma said to me, 'Take care of him, Longhurst; never leave him.' And now, just as the tutor is coming, and——"

"Come, come, that will do," the doctor said; "let us be off. That is right; wrap him up in the blanket; and you, boy, get my rug. Now we shall do all right." And raising Theodore in his arms, the doctor bid Mrs. Longhurst get

into the gig and then he would lift him up to her.

"Wait, please," Theodore's little voice was heard from under the blanket. "I want to thank Mrs. Press for being so kind, and the boy for pulling me out, and——"

"You are kindly welcome, sir, I am sure," Mrs. Press said. "We are only thankful, Johnnie and I, to have been useful."

"Good-bye, good-bye," Theodore called in a muffled voice, as, snugly wrapt up in Nurse's arms, he was borne away at a rapid pace in the doctor's gig.

When they were fairly off the spectators drew nearer.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," Mrs. Cross said. "You'll get a pretty little bit of money for this, and a new blanket into the bargain. It's a pity Ted didn't happen to be on the rocks, but that's like my luck. How did you come to push him in, Johnnie?"

"How dare you say I pushed the little gent in? I got him out easy enough; it was not a deep pool."

A disagreeable laugh was Mrs. Cross's answer as she turned away, her attention being diverted

for the moment by the sight of Master Martin trudging along with a brown fishing-net he was bringing to one of the fishermen's cottages farther along the beach.

"Well, Old Crooked Legs," Ted began.

"Stop that," Johnnie said, "stop that. Here, Master Martin, let me carry that net along for you."

Master Martin sank down on the fragments of a stone wall which had been raised to break the force of the waves when in a great storm they came rolling over the belt of shingle in front of the cottages with tremendous force.

An angry light came into his eyes as Ted Cross whistled to one of his companions and said—

"Here's Old Crooked Legs, and what a lark! Jack is acting the good boy, and is going to carry his net to Bob's cottage for him. So kind of him, ain't it?"

The mocking laugh which accompanied the words was hard to bear. Johnnie doubled his fist and said—

"Shut up, or I'll——"

"Come on, then, come on."

"No, Johnnie, no," his mother said. "Remember what father used to say about fighting. It

was something about ruling the spirit being a greater thing than taking a city."

Johnnie hesitated for a moment, then snatching up the net, he ran off with it.

Master Martin shook his head when Mrs. Press wanted him to take a seat in her cottage till Johnnie came back, but beckoning her, said—

"Will you tell me, ma'am, if the little gentleman is hurted? I heard the folks talking as I came along, and that the doctor was taking of him home with a broken head."

It was so very unusual for Master Martin to enter into conversation with any one, that Mrs. Press was quite surprised when he repeated, "Do 'ee tell me, ma'am."

Then Mrs. Press related the story as we know it, and Master Martin nodded his head and rocked his body to and fro, murmuring to himself.

"He's a little angel, that's what he is," Mrs. Press said, "and I am glad enough to have had the chance of serving him. I only wish my Johnnie might get the place at the Hall, but I am afraid he won't have the good fortune to get it. There's them who will try to prevent it. I know that very well."

Master Martin's words were few, but when Johnnie came back with the information that

Bob Smith was out, but he had left the net with Mrs. Smith, who said she would pay for it next time—

"Always next time—always next time," the poor little man said as he drew himself together and prepared to trudge back the way he came. "You are sure his head ain't broke?" were his parting words.

"Quite sure; it was only the shock of the fall," Mrs. Press answered him.

CHAPTER V

THE TUTOR

LITTLE Sir Theodore did not seem any the worse for his sea-bath the next day.

Salt water rarely if ever gives cold. Nurse said that the pretty sailor's suit was so stiffened, that it could only be given to a poor child in the village, or if Sir Theodore was allowed to bathe, it would make a nice bathing-dress.

As it was one of his grandmother's fixed ideas that her little grandson was too delicate to bathe, and she had refused to allow it, she was naturally much surprised the next morning, when Theodore went to pay her his daily short visit after his nursery-breakfast, Theodore said—

"I fell into the sea, yesterday, Grannie. Nurse would not tell you last evening, because you had a bad ache in your side."

Old Lady Chamberlayne put her hand to her heart.

"Ring for Longhurst! fell into the sea, and I

was never told; it is excessively wrong of Longhurst. She has proved herself very unfit for her charge, and it is a comfort to me to think the tutor is coming to-day. Ring the bell, child, and let us have no more concealments."

Longhurst had been expecting the summons, and had stood in the corridor trembling as she waited for it. She appeared now, and gave a hurried and frightened account of what had happened.

Lady Chamberlayne was somewhat pitiless; she asked that the doctor should be immediately sent for, and informed poor Longhurst that, from that day she would have nothing more to do with Theodore but take care of his clothes, and attend to his dressing and undressing.

Theodore stood by his dear Nurse, holding her hand as a token of sympathy, and looking up into her troubled face with a world of love and tenderness in his eyes.

"Grannie," he began, "it was nobody's fault but mine. I have gathered pin-patches often."

"Pin-patches!" Lady Chamberlayne exclaimed. "That is a vulgar word, only used by common people. You mean periwinkles, I suppose. Well, you will gather no more. Now that will do. I am very much upset. I hope, Theodore, you will be obedient to Mr. Mackenzie."

"Mr. who, Grannie?"

"Mr. Mackenzie, your tutor,—and be obliging and kind to little Master Prescott. They will be here to luncheon, and you must show your little friend the schoolroom."

"*Is* he my little friend?" Theodore asked rather doubtfully, recalling the first interview with some misgiving.

"Of course he is your friend—what a strange child you are!—and I expect you to make the little boy welcome. Now that will do."

"I am sure, my lady, I am dreadful sorry for what has happened," poor Longhurst said, shaking with sobs, "and if it wasn't for the promise I made my dear lady, never to leave Sir Theodore till——"

"That will do, Longhurst. I really can bear no more."

Theodore and his faithful friend had left the room, and no sooner were they in the corridor, than the child threw his arms round Nurse's neck.

"Oh, don't cry. I love you, Nana, and I wish no tutor was coming with that boy."

"So do I, my darling—so do I; but we must not say so, and don't vex your little heart about me. You can come and tell me every little

trouble, you know, and I'll see you are not put upon by tutors and boys."

Nurse spoke in the plural number; it was a habit of hers when she wished to be emphatic.

"Are we to do our lessons in the nursery? I wonder how the boy will like that, Nana?"

"Nursery! Lor, my dear, you must come and see the schoolroom; it is all done up. Here's Jane the housemaid. She'll tell you if the rooms in the south wing are ready, and show 'em to you. I haven't the heart."

All these lamentations were very bad for little Theodore, and it was excessively unwise of Nurse to indulge in them. But, with the thought of seeing something new, Theodore skipped off gaily with Jane to see the rooms where the new boy and the tutor were to take up their abode.

The schoolroom had not been used for a long time, but it had been newly papered and painted, and the book-shelves were all varnished, and had new leather edges, fastened with bright brass nails, to keep the dust from any books that might be put there. They were for the most part empty, except one or two, where old books belonging to Theodore's father's and an aunt's school-days were ranged in rows, the backs in

several cases broken, and ragged leaves peeping out from top and bottom.

The schoolroom had a large bow-window—an old-fashioned bow, with many small panes of glass—and it looked out on the leaden roof of another bow on the floor below, which did not add to the cheerful aspect of the room.

"Two big balls! What are they for?" Theodore cried. "They can't be to play with. And there are maps on one; and I don't know what the other is. Do you know, Jane?"

"They are globes, Sir Theodore. You'll learn all about them from your tutor."

"I shall like that," Theodore said, touching the globes in turn with his fingers and making them revolve. "Oh, I shall like to learn all about the big balls—globes, I mean. What a large table, and a lot of drawers! I suppose the tutor will sit in that big chair, and the boy and me on these high stools."

"Well, come along, Sir Theodore; you'll have enough of this room before long, and wish yourself out of it."

The tutor's bedroom opened from the schoolroom, and was visited next; then across the passage were two small rooms.

"One for you, sir, and one for the young gent who is coming."

Theodore looked doubtful now.

"I shall go on sleeping in the night-nursery," he said. "I shan't leave Nana; she'd be so lonely, you know."

"I expect you'll have to do as you are bid," Jane said; "but I have no more time to stand gossiping, so you had better run back to the nursery."

Sir Theodore went rather slowly down the long passage to the short flight of steps which led to the floor on which the inhabited rooms of the large, rambling old house were situated.

Something told him that a new life was beginning, and that everything would change. Would it be nicer and happier, or would it be quite the reverse?

For a few minutes he was grave as he walked soberly along, and when he came to the stairs, he put one foot down on each step and drew the other after it, instead of taking the whole short flight with a flying leap, with the help of his hands on the banisters, as was his custom.

Suddenly a thought struck him; there were to be no lessons with Longhurst to-day. Of course, the verse of the Bible and hymn out of his little text-book, which Nurse never allowed him to miss learning and repeating to her while he was

waiting for his breakfast, had not been forgotten; but Nurse had put away the slate and the copy-book, and the Easy Reading-Book and Little Arthur's History, in the cupboard, saying with a sigh—

"You'll have a lot of new-fangled books, I dare say, now. I only hope they won't work your poor brain too hard. If they do, they'll repent it."

Theodore's sudden thought when he roused himself from his meditations on the coming tutor was that he would go and have a talk with Master Martin. So he snatched his cap from the stand in the hall, and dashed out across the lawn and through the field-path to Master Martin's cottage.

His heart beat fast as he ran, not feeling quite sure whether he was doing right, and yet full of the pleasure he thought it might give Master Martin.

But poor little Theodore was to be disappointed this time. There was no Master Martin to be seen. The door of the hut was shut, and the rope pulled tightly across the two pointed palings.

Theodore crept under the rope and went up to the hut, steadying himself on a flower-pot turned upside down to look in at the window.

All was quiet and nothing was stirring. Something like awe came over Sir Theodore—he was so lonely, and a little afraid he had done wrong to come again. "But the tutor will never, never let me come to see poor Master Martin, and it was for the last time," he said.

Theodore set off, his golden hair flying in the wind as he ran full speed to the gate of the Hall.

A carriage was just driving in, and a boy's voice was heard, "Look, sir, that's the little chap."

Theodore, burrowing amongst the laurels which skirted the drive, knew it was Robin Prescott's voice, and the tutor was in the carriage with him.

"No; it must be a mistake," he thought, as he got within sight of the Hall-door and saw a young man spring out of the carriage.

"He can't be the tutor," Theodore said; "he is like a boy; he isn't old enough."

Poor little boy! he stood in his hiding-place behind a thick bush of laurustinus till the luggage had all been taken off the carriage, and the tutor and Robin Prescott followed the footman into the hall. Then he ran round to the back entrance and up the familiar stairs to his old quarters, and told Nurse, breathless and excited, that he had seen the tutor, and he was not one bit what he expected—only perhaps it was not he, after all.

"I dare say it is, and we must make the best of him, my dear," Nurse said in a melancholy voice. "Where have you been galloping off to? Your face is as red as a peony, and you are quite out of breath."

"I went to see Master Martin just for once more," Theodore said apologetically; "but he was not at home."

"Well, it was very naughty of you; but then it's your last bit of liberty; you'll not go and see the old man again in a hurry."

Mr. Mackenzie lost no time in making friends with his small pupil. He seemed perfectly at ease with Lady Chamberlayne at luncheon, and surprised Theodore afterwards by putting his hand on his shoulder and saying, "Will you show us about the place, my boy? Everything is new to us."

"Not to me," Robin said, "not to me, sir. I have been here before."

"Well, there is plenty that will bear seeing twice, I should think."

He still kept his hand on Theodore's shoulder—such a kind firm hand it was, and Theodore, looking up into the tutor's face, saw a pair of smiling blue eyes looking down on him as he said, "Run and get your hat, my boy, and Robin and I will

get ours, and meet you here in five minutes. I hope we shall find our way to our own quarters; but it will take time to learn the geography of the Hall."

"I will show you, sir," the footman now interposed; "it is a rambling old house this, and full of turns and twists."

James had, like all the rest of the household, set himself against the coming change, and had declared his intention of treating the tutor just as was convenient; but the sunny face and merry laugh, with the pleasant courteous manner which acknowledged any little service, won James's heart.

"He comes of real gentry, depend on it," he said in the servants' hall that evening. "I can tell that with half an eye. I know a gentleman when I see him, I hope; and I shouldn't wonder if it's the best thing in the world for Sir Theodore to have a tutor, after all."

CHAPTER VI

THE TUTOR MAKES FRIENDS

THE question as to which boy was to attend to the pony and be useful to the two young gentlemen was still unsettled.

At first it was thought that it could not be decided till Mr. Harrison's next visit, and he was not able to come to Knapton, owing to urgent business, for another week.

Mr. Mackenzie had what is called "a gift" in the management of boys, and he saw before many days were over that little Theodore had a great deal to learn and to bear from his companion Robin Prescott.

He did not interfere unless it was absolutely necessary, but he kept a watchful eye on the two boys, that a little good-humoured teazing from Robin should never grow into bullying, or that a sensitive nature should not make Theodore a coward.

Lady Chamberlayne was surprised, when Mr.

Mackenzie had been with the boys for two days, at his asking to see her for a few moments one morning.

"It is nothing wrong, I hope, with my little grandson," Lady Chamberlayne began.

"Oh no, nothing wrong."

"You find him very backward, I am afraid."

"Perhaps I do, but he is very intelligent and only too thoughtful. I came to ask if we might make an expedition to Cromer and buy some cricket things—bats, balls, and wickets?"

"Cricket! oh, is not that a very dangerous game?"

"Not as I shall let the boys begin, and I hope you will allow me to have a club in time with other boys."

"There are no boys in the neighbourhood," Lady Chamberlayne said. "Theodore has had no companions."

"No, and it is what he wants. May I venture to ask if his hair may be cut short; it is time, I think, at his age. He was a little distressed yesterday by a lady on the beach asking in a loud voice, 'Is that a girl or a boy?'"

"How excessively rude!" Lady Chamberlayne said. "Well, I must speak to Longhurst, and he must be well wrapt up in a shawl when his hair is taken off, or he will get cold."

"I should like to order some books. Shall I give you the list?"

"Oh no. I know nothing about children's books. Mr. Harrison said everything that was necessary was to be had."

"I heard from Mr. Harrison to-day," Mr. Mackenzie said. "He mentions two boys in the village who were anxious to get the place here to look after the pony. Cross and Press are the names. As he cannot come for some days, owing to the pressure of business, he says, with your permission, I may choose which boy I think most suitable."

"Certainly, Mr. Mackenzie. I am so much of an invalid, I am not able to enter into these matters. I must thank you to act as you think best, only taking care my delicate little grandson's health is made the first consideration."

Mr. Mackenzie took the hint, and understood that he was not to trouble Lady Chamberlayne about details, and that he was free to follow his own inclination in the management of the boys. So much the better, he thought, as he went into the schoolroom, where he found the children at the table with their books open before them.

Both were silent, and Mr. Mackenzie saw that Robin Prescott was smothering a laugh, while

Theodore had a very suspicious drop on his long eyelashes.

"Shut the books," he said; "we will have a holiday to-day, and go to Cromer."

"That will be jolly," Robin said. "You and I can walk, sir, but he can't, he is such a weak little chap."

"I am not weak," Theodore began. "I can run ever so fast. I beat you yesterday; you know I did."

"P'raps I let you beat me to please you," was the reply.

"Well, we will all three have a race on the sands, and perhaps *I* shall let Robin beat *me*. Now, then, run and get your hats, and tell Mrs. Longhurst I want to speak to her."

Theodore ran gaily away, but Robin lingered.

"He is only a baby, sir; it is no fun playing with him."

"I expect *he*—if you mean Sir Theodore—finds it no fun to play with you."

"Well, I can't help it; he does talk such rubbish about a little old man with a big head and crooked legs he wants me to see and be kind to. I don't know what he means, he is such a soft little chap, and only fit to play with girls—quite a coward, I expect."

Mr. Mackenzie said, "Look here, Prescott; you and I have been at Knapton three days, and never once have I heard Sir Theodore say—what he might well say—that you are rough with him, and tease him and laugh at him. You had been at it, I suspect, when I came into the room. As to his being a coward, look out that you are not the coward, for it is a coward's part to bully any one who is smaller and weaker. From what I have seen already, I should say Sir Theodore has a big soul in that little fragile body, and a spirit too! So shut up, and let me hear no more complaints about a child younger and weaker than you are. Run off now; I want to speak to Mrs. Longhurst."

Nurse had been standing at the schoolroom door waiting for Robin to leave the room. She had made up her mind to dislike the tutor, and was now on the defensive.

"I say, Mrs. Nurse."

"Longhurst, if you please, sir!"

"Well, Mrs. Longhurst, then, I think Sir Theodore ought to have his hair cut short; he wishes for it himself, and as we are going into Cromer, I thought I might take him to the barber's."

"He'll catch a stiff neck without his hair, sir," and poor Nurse sighed as she thought of the loss

of those golden locks she had tended with such care. "Mr. Short would call here to do it if you please to order him to do so. It has never been cut before—it always takes the curl out—but——"

"All right! then, we'll call on Mr. Short and tell him to come to-morrow morning. I am to look after the boys who want to get the place here to attend to the pony. Do you know anything of them?"

"I know Mrs. Press, sir, Jack's mother; she is a very respectable woman—a widow—and the other day when Sir Theodore fell into the pool, I took him into her cottage to dry. It is the first accident I have ever had with him, and I feel it very much—very much indeed, the way her ladyship took it."

"It was only a sea bath, from what I hear, and I think dips in the sea would do the boy a vast deal of good. I hope you think he is happy under the new rule?"

Nurse hesitated.

"It's early days yet, sir, to know; but I, who have nursed him from his cradle, can say a better little boy never lived, and I hope you'll see to it, sir, if you'll excuse me for saying so, but the other young gentleman is very rough with him; he does tease him dreadful."

"Oh, I'll keep my eye on the boys, Mrs. Long——hurst, is it? But we must try to make Sir Theodore manly to fit him for school."

"For school!" Nurse exclaimed. "He is never going to be sent to school?"

"Not yet — not for another year. Now," said Mr. Mackenzie kindly, "don't fret yourself about the boy. I know how good you have been to him, and how you must feel about handing him over to me; but I will do my best to take care of him, you may depend on that."

Nurse was quite won over by the young tutor's kind, frank manner, and from that time she ceased to look upon him as an intruder, and only wished she could be sure that Robin Prescott was kind to her darling when the tutor's back was turned.

To the two boys' great delight, Mr. Mackenzie said they should have the pony for the expedition to Cromer, which was three miles off.

To their still greater delight, Mr. Mackenzie went to the stable-yard himself, and led the pony from the stall to get his saddle and bridle from the harness-room, and was beginning to put the saddle on its back, when the coachman and groom appeared, looking very much as if they thought he had no business to meddle in their domain.

Like the fat pair of carriage-horses, they were the victims of having far less work than was good for them; and yet, when the pony had arrived, the coachman had looked upon it as an unnecessary appendage, and had told Mr. Harrison that they had no time to look after it, and such a rough creature, scarcely bigger than a "dawg," might be left to take care of itself.

But the surly coachman, like Mrs. Longhurst, had changed his mind about the tutor before he had left the yard with Sir Theodore on the pony's back.

"I didn't know a learned gentleman knew aught about horses," the coachman said to the groom. "He knows how to saddle the little beast, and he is very well spoken and has a handsome face; but to call that a pony!"

The name of the pony caused some discussion on the way to Cromer. As he was a native of the Shetland Isles, Mr. Mackenzie called him his fellow-countryman, and suggested a variety of Scotch names for the boys to choose from. "Donald" was decided upon just as they reached Cromer, and stopped before a shop opposite the church, where Mr. Mackenzie went in, giving a boy who was lounging about, a penny to stand by Donald's head while he went into the shop.

A bat for each boy was bought, Mr. Mackenzie suiting their size and weight to their owners. It was difficult to find one light enough for Theodore's slender fingers, while Robin, who had played cricket before, was proud to wield a much heavier one. Then there was the ball to choose, and a box full of little round white balls for rounders.

All this was a delightful experience for Theodore, and he could scarcely restrain his excitement. He had a way of dancing and moving his hands when he was pleased; and Robin said—

"What are you fidgeting about like that for?"

"Oh, I don't know. I feel so pleased, buying the cricket things."

"The cricket things! Why can't you say wickets, and bats, and balls?"

Theodore's sunny face clouded over, but he made no rejoinder.

The next visit was to the bookseller's, where Mr. Mackenzie handed in a list to the master of the shop, and bought two magazines which were lying on the counter.

"Now we have only to go to Mr. Short to ask him to come to cut off your hair, Theodore."

"Oh, now! We can let him do it now, please, tutor."

A loud laugh from Robin made the colour rush to Theodore's face. "I ought to have said sir—not tutor," he said.

"Never mind; tutor is rather a pleasant variety. We must leave the message for Mr. Short and then turn homewards. You shall ride Donald going back, Robin."

Robin was very pleased to show how well he could ride, and was perfectly independent of the rein which Mr. Mackenzie had held when Theodore was on Donald's back.

"May I have a gallop, sir?" he asked.

"When we get out of the town on the Sherringham Road; but you are not to go out of sight. Donald's short legs do not go over much ground when at a walking pace, but he goes fast enough at something between a canter and a gallop. When you get to that cottage we see at the end of this road, turn and meet us or wait for us. Do you hear? And——"

"All right, sir. I know how to ride."

Away went Donald, after a sharp cut with the whip across his neck, which he resented as an indignity. He threw up his heels and lowered his head, and was off like the wind, out of sight beyond the cottage in the far distance, and Mr. Mackenzie, with Theodore doing his best to keep

up with his long strides with his little steps, followed. Theodore was well content to have Mr. Mackenzie to himself, and began to talk to him as he had talked to Mrs. Longhurst.

"I want you, tutor—I mean sir—to go and see Master Martin."

"Who is Master Martin?—That young scapegrace has gone out of sight?" he said by way of interlude.—"Who is Master Martin?"

"A very nice old man, with a big head and funny legs, who lives in a house he built for himself not very far from our gate; but it is such a little house on the moor, all amongst the furze-bushes, that you would never see it unless you looked for it. You don't pass it on the high-road. You've got to take a turn across the moor."

They had turned by the cottage now, and another long straight road lay before them, but nothing was to be seen of Donald and his rider.

"I expect they have got home by this time," Theodore said. "Don't you?"

"Let us hope Pride has not had a bad fall. Are you tired of walking so fast, my boy?" for Theodore's little feet began to falter a little, and his breath came fast in his efforts to keep up with Mr. Mackenzie's strides.

"I am just a little bit tired; but never mind."

"Here! get on my back, and we shall get over the ground faster.—Now then!" Mr. Mackenzie knelt down and drew Theodore's arms round his neck. "That's it now; hold on fast."

Theodore laughed merrily.

"I never thought my tutor would take me pick-a-back. You are so funny, and"—with emphasis—"so very nice."

On they went, but there was no sign of Robin and the pony. At last they came upon Master Martin sitting on the bank with a bundle of fishing-nets by his side, and the blood trickling from his forehead.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE HOUSE ON WHEELS

"HALLO! what is the matter?" Mr. Mackenzie said as Theodore scrambled down from his elevated position on the tutor's back and went up to Master Martin.

"What has happened to you, dear Master Martin?" the child said, pulling out his handkerchief and trying to wipe the blood from the wound in the big overhanging forehead.

Master Martin lifted bewildered eyes to Sir Theodore's face and said, "I was tramping along the road when he knocked me down."

"Who knocked you down?"

"A young gent galloping on a pony, sir. It's rather hard a poor man can't get along without being hurted by a young villain, that it is."

"But he did not do it on purpose, Master Martin," Theodore said; "of course he didn't do it on purpose."

"He never stopped, and only shouted out, the

A Young Villain.—*Page 70.*

young rascal, 'Pick yourself up, old 'un.' But it's always the same—always the same. There's never no place for me; all the youngsters are alike."

"Not all—not all," Theodore said. "I'm so sorry for you."

"This youngster, anyhow, shall be taught better," Mr. Mackenzie said to the old man. "He disobeyed my orders, and went galloping off on the pony at a mad pace. He shall be well punished."

"Oh, perhaps he could not stop Donald when once he was off, sir. He ran away with him."

"That may be, but he had no business to slash him across the neck as he did; no pony would stand such treatment."

The next thing to do was to help Master Martin home.

"Now, my man, let me bind this handkerchief round your head, and then we'll see you home."

Poor Master Martin rose to his feet, but he was dizzy, and put out his hand for support.

"What's to be done with them nets? I am as weak as an infant."

Mr. Mackenzie threw the bundle of nets over his shoulder, and taking Master Martin's arm,

said, "Come, we must get you home. Walk on the other side of him, Theodore."

But Master Martin sank down on the turf-bank again, and shaking his head in a melancholy way, said, "I'm done for."

"Not a bit of it; it's not a deep cut; your forehead is only just grazed," Mr. Mackenzie said. "Come!"

But Master Martin showed no signs of "coming," and sat in a state of hopeless dejection, with his crooked legs doubled up under him and his hand pressing his forehead.

Mr. Mackenzie began to be puzzled as to what he should do next, for he was uneasy about Robin, and wondering whether Donald had thrown him off his back as a revenge for his sharp cut across his shaggy neck.

"We shall have to leave him," Mr. Mackenzie said, "and send a cart for him."

"Oh, I shouldn't like him to be left all alone, sir," Theodore exclaimed; "some of the rude boys might come and teaze him. I'll stay with Master Martin."

It cost Theodore something to make this offer. It was a lonely road, stretching out, like many flat East Country roads, in long straight lines in both directions, and with a fir plantation on either side.

"I'll stay, sir, if you think you won't be a very long time gone—I'll stay!"

Theodore's heart beat fast as Mr. Mackenzie took him at his word.

"Very well," he said. "I can get over the ground faster than you can, and I'll find some one to help the poor old man home."

With this Mr. Mackenzie was gone. Theodore watched his figure getting less and less, as he walked at a great speed along the straight road.

He went close to Master Martin and said, "Does your head ache very badly? I have a headache sometimes."

"Don't suppose you was ever knocked down by a 'oss, was you?"

"No; but I fell out of a swing and hit my head."

"Humph!" was the only rejoinder Master Martin made.

"I thought you'd like me to stay with you while my tutor went to fetch somebody to help you to get home. He does walk so fast. He looks no bigger now than one of my men in the Noah's Ark."

"Humph!" was again the only rejoinder with a sigh, and then a murmured "Oh jear! oh jear!"

Theodore was very much disappointed, and he began to feel the solitude oppressive.

The wind made moan in the fir-trees behind, and those opposite on the other side of the road looked very dark and mysterious. Every rustle and every sound made him look behind him with anxious, wide-open eyes, and he began to be filled with a nameless terror that something or some one might come out of the fir-wood.

If only Master Martin would speak, and not only say "Humph!" and sigh out "Oh jear, jear!" Theodore would have felt comforted and less afraid. But his child-heart, brave and tender as it was, began to sink within him when no one appeared from either end of that long straight road.

At last, from the direction least expected, there was a dull sound of wheels, and a large object was seen in the distance, coming slowly but surely towards the place where Theodore and Master Martin were sitting. As it came nearer, and was eagerly scanned by Theodore's blue eyes, it took shape and form, and Theodore springing to his feet exclaimed—

"Oh, I am so glad, so very glad! It's the basket-cart, and Mrs. Broome will help Master Martin home."

He ran to meet the van, his golden curls flapping in the breeze, and very soon Mr. Curtis, who had been riding on the footboard smoking a short clay pipe, got down, and calling out "Wo-ho!" to the steady-going horse, said to his wife—

"Mother! here's the little gent all by himself."

"Oh, please, Mrs. Broome," Theodore began, "will you—can you let poor Master Martin ride in your cart? He—he has been knocked down by——"

"Bless the dear child!" Mrs. Curtis exclaimed, letting her portly figure down from the steps with due caution, the skein of worsted with which she was mending Curtis's stockings round her neck, and the stocking itself on her left arm. "Bless the dear child! Why, I declare it's Sir Theodore! All alone! Where's Nurse, my dear? It's a mercy no gipsy tramps haven't got hold of you. All alone, and nobody with you!"

"Yes," Theodore said, "somebody is with me, or," correcting himself, "I'm with somebody. Don't you see poor Master Martin on the bank there?"

"Lor, poor old fellow, he is always in trouble. Yes, I'll give him a lift with pleasure; and if

you'll condescend to ride along with us, we shall be proud."

"Oh, thank you very much, Mrs. Broome."

"Curtis, my dear! Curtis is my name."

"I beg your pardon; I thought it was either basket or broom. I shall be so pleased to ride with you to Knapton, but do come on now and make Master Martin get into your cart. I expect we shall meet my tutor soon; he left me with Master Martin while he went to get a cart or something to take him home in."

"A pretty tutor to leave a young gentleman like you all alone with that poor old man!"

"Oh, but I wished to be left; I liked to be left, though it did seem an enormous time till I saw you coming. At first I was not quite sure it was the van, and then, when I saw the brushes, and brooms, and baskets waggling in the wind, I knew it *was* you, and I *was* glad."

Theodore was in the van now, and they jogged over the quarter of a mile along which he had run to meet it, to the place where Master Martin sat, hunched up, with his legs crossed and his big head resting on his hand.

"Master Martin, hi!" Mr. Curtis said. "Wake up; we are going to take you along with us."

"Yes, Master Martin, and it's so nice in the

van; it's the dearest little house, and such a pretty picture hanging up."

By means of pulling and shaking, Master Martin was hauled upon his feet by Mr. Curtis. He certainly was very tiresome; he began to murmur, "He didn't want to be a trouble to no one; he'd walk along home and take his time."

"Stuff and nonsense!" Mrs. Curtis said. "You just do as this dear little gentleman wishes, and we'll soon have you at home. I'll take a turn out of the way for once to oblige you, and set you down at the corner leading to the Hall. What have you done to your forehead, eh?"

Master Martin shook his head sorrowfully, and lifting the hankerchief which Mr. Mackenzie had tied round the cut, he said—

"It's a bad job, that it is, and all comes of a young rascal galloping like mad and throwing of me down. They are all alike—all alike—gentry and poor boys; they don't care what they do to a poor old man."

"Now, I call that very ungrateful, Master Martin, when this dear little gentleman is that good and kind to you, that it's quite surprising."

"Yes, yes, maybe—maybe," Master Martin said; "but the rest of 'em are all alike—all alike."

"He's always full of cranks, my dear," Mrs. Curtis said in an aside to Theodore. "You mustn't mind. Poor old man! he has lived alone so long, with no one to care for him, that he has got cross-grained. But never mind; don't you take it to heart, my dear. This is a queer world, and them you does most for cares less about you. There's Curtis there, I've done everything for him—I couldn't do more. I married him because he seemed so put to it to get on, but he ain't too grateful. We must not look for gratitude, and—well, we can do without it."

Theodore might have felt even more distressed that all his efforts for Master Martin did not seem to please him had he not been so interested in looking through Mrs. Curtis's house on wheels, that for the time everything else was forgotten.

While Master Martin sat on the footboard of the cart, propped up by a sack at his back, and Mr. Curtis walked by the side of the old horse at a jogtrot pace, Sir Theodore was examining Mrs. Curtis's possessions. Her bead-mats, her china plates, set up carefully on shelves, protected by strong strips of wood from falling; her workbox, with mother-of-pearl pattern on the lid; her big Bible with gilt edges; her "little curiosities," as she called them, in a little cupboard with a glass

door, which was the pride of her heart. Curtis had nailed it up in a corner securely, and within its doors was a medley of articles all carefully treasured. Pink shells; a box covered with velvet and with gilt feet; a cup with "For a Good Boy" on it in gilt letters; a child's whip and a trumpet, and a pair of little shoes; a good many Christmas cards; and in the middle, nailed to the back of the cupboard, two mourning cards with black edges and embossed weeping willows, with names below.

These two cards told the story of Mrs. Curtis's early life. One was in memory of her first husband, the other bore the name of "Bertie, the darling son of Jane and Henry Blake, aged six years."

Theodore had the instinct of a true gentleman, and as he stood before the cupboard, the doors of which Mrs. Curtis had opened, he thought he should like to know about Bertie, who was six years old, just a year younger than he was. "But she might not like me to ask," he thought.

Mrs. Curtis, however, forestalled the question.

"Bertie was my little boy, my dear, and that's why I love the picture of 'Bubbles.' It's his image—his born image; and, if I may venture to say so, there's a look of my Bertie in you. I was

married long ago to my first husband, and when he and Bertie died—well, I thought I should die too; but, you see, I got over it, and I put the little money my husband left me into the basket trade, and then bought the van and married Curtis. He was in a poor plight, and glad enough to work for me and feed the horse; and a man is a protection on lonely roads, though he is only Tim. I don't want to disparage him; he is well enough, and a good husband—as they go. But I ought to ask pardon for troubling a little gentleman like you with my story."

"I like to hear it very much, Mrs. Curtis. I should like to live in this dear little house and travel about the roads."

"Oh, you'd soon get tired of it—jog, jog, month in and month out, and sometimes such poor trade we can scarce pay our way. There's some one calling," said Mrs. Curtis, locking up her precious cupboard, and hastening to the door with Sir Theodore.

It was Mr. Mackenzie, who, on seeing Master Martin crouching on the footboard alone, felt a sudden fear that something had happened to Theodore.

"Where is Sir Theodore Chamberlayne?" he asked.

"Here! here! I am quite safe. Oh, I have had a delightful ride with Mrs. Curtis, sir. You should see her dear little weenie room, and her——"

"Well, come along now. I have got the spring-cart here, and we shall be home in no time."

"Mrs. Curtis is so kind to me and Master Martin; might I ride home in the van?"

"No, no! We are very late as it is, and I must be quick. Jump in, Theodore; the old man will get home quick enough with these kind people."

"They are very kind," Theodore said. "Good-bye, Mrs. Curtis. I hope I shall see you again very soon; thank you very much for showing me your little house. Good-bye, Master Martin;" and then the spring-cart used at the Hall for errands at Cromer and Aylsham was quickly out of sight, Mr. Mackenzie driving the old cob, which did duty in many ways about the estate, at a quicker pace than he liked, feeling that his first expedition with the two boys had hardly been a success.

"Well," Mrs. Curtis said, "I never saw such a darling as this child, but one. He is too good for this world, as the other was, bless him!"

Mr. Curtis made no rejoinder to this remark. With "Bertie" he had nothing to do; he belonged to a distant period in which he took no part.

"It beats me, Master Martin, that you ain't more grateful to Sir Theodore."

Master Martin lifted his heavy head and looked at Mrs. Curtis with his dull prominent eyes and said, "That's all you know about it!"

CHAPTER VIII

RESCUE

Mr. Mackenzie did not seem inclined to talk on the drive home; and Theodore having asked if Robin was safe, and getting for answer, almost roughly spoken, "Yes, he's all right," and taking a view of the tutor's side-face, which was very grave, he asked no more questions. "He is vexed about something," Theodore thought; "he isn't really cross, so I won't tease him."

Theodore ran upstairs when they reached the Hall, to get ready for his dinner, and gave Mrs. Longhurst a confused account of all that had happened, in which Mrs. Curtis, Master Martin, the picture of the boy like Bertie, and the dim little house on wheels were all mixed up in a confused history, of which Mrs. Longhurst justly said she could neither make head nor tail.

"I sat alone on the Sherringham Road with Master Martin. You don't know how glad I was to see the baskets and brooms and——"

"I know it's a quarter to two, and your grandmamma will be put out if you ain't ready. As to your being alone on the road, well——"

Sir Theodore was gone before Mrs. Longhurst added to this—

"Well, a pretty tutor to leave a child alone like that. He is too young, and ain't used to children, and thinks too much of learning, though he is very well spoken. Still, a governess would have suited better."

When Theodore reached the dining-room, he found Mr. Mackenzie there, and Lady Chamberlayne just coming in.

"Good-morning, Grannie," Theodore said.

"Good-morning, Theodore. Where is your little friend?"

Mr. Mackenzie answered the question.

"Robin will not come down to luncheon to-day——"

"Is he ill? Oh, I hope it is no infectious disease."

"He is perfectly well," was the answer, "but I found it necessary to punish him for disobedience."

As it was not Theodore who was punished, Lady Chamberlayne did not pursue the subject, and a somewhat ominous silence fell upon the small party.

Generally Mr. Mackenzie kept up a bright conversation with the two little boys, encouraging them to talk, and often interesting Lady Chamberlayne, who began by apparently taking no notice of what was going on, and then at last finding that the young tutor was a very pleasant companion. She almost meditated the possibility of asking the Vicar and two or three people to dine, an event which had not happened for many a long day; but if the tutor could entertain them, she might be able to bear the fatigue!

Theodore kept silent about the pony and his waiting on the road with Master Martin. He thought it might be "telling tales," which would not be kind to Robin; and if Mr. Mackenzie did not say anything of what had happened, he determined he would not do so.

When the luncheon was over, Mr. Mackenzie told Theodore to run away, and he would join him in the schoolroom in a few minutes.

Theodore thought to himself, "He is going to tell Grannie about the pony; he always tells everything. I think I will go and see Robin. I am very sorry about him. He hates rice-pudding, and it was such a nice gooseberry-pudding to-day."

Theodore found the schoolroom empty, and

then went along the corridor to the bedroom where Robin slept. He tapped rather timidly at the door, and turned the handle with some hesitation. But the door was locked on the inside, and to Theodore's question, "May I come in?" there was no answer.

"Robin, I do so want to see you; do open the door."

But still no answer, and Theodore gave up at last and went to the schoolroom. He got out his Latin grammar and began to learn a declension, but his thoughts were wandering over the events of the morning—the shopping in Cromer and the finding of Master Martin sitting disconsolately by the hedge on the Sherringham Road. Presently he heard voices below in the garden under the schoolroom window, and the sound of hurrying feet, and Mr. Mackenzie's voice, "Fetch a ladder, and be quick about it."

"Oh, I must run down and see what it is," Theodore said. "The tutor did not tell me I was to stay in the schoolroom, so it won't be disobedience."

Theodore was running off to the hall when he met Mrs. Longhurst.

"Oh, my dear! my dear! there's such a fuss. That naughty boy, Master Prescott, has climbed

out of his bedroom window, and he is hanging on a branch of the great pear-tree, which may give way any minute. Dear me! it is a pity that boy ever came here. Those that brought him here have a great deal to answer for. Why can't folks leave well alone, I say?"

Theodore had not heard all this speech of Nurse's, for he had scampered past her, and was soon under the window, where a knot of servants had assembled.

Mr. Mackenzie's face was very stern and grave as he stood by the roots of the old pear-tree waiting for the ladder.

Robin's courage, of which he was so proud, had deserted him. He was calling out for help in a loud, shrill voice—

"I can't move; my foot has caught in a branch. Oh, I shall drop down directly. Pray, pray, help me!"

"I have sent for a ladder," Mr. Mackenzie said. "Don't make such a row."

"It's all your fault if I am killed—all your fault. Oh, this branch is cracking; I am falling!"

It was at this critical moment that Mr. Mackenzie took the ladder fetched from the stable-yard, and putting it against the wall, had climbed up to the place where Robin hung.

"Now, then, give me your hand."

"I dare not! I dare not!"

"Do as I tell you. I will hold you. Do as I bid you."

But obedience had never been part of poor Robin's education, and he still continued to cry out that he was falling and should be killed!

"Put your foot on the rung of the ladder, I say, and give me your hand," Mr. Mackenzie said. But, paralysed with fear, Robin still hesitated.

"One of you," Mr. Mackenzie called to the men who stood at the foot of the ladder, "be ready to catch him if I find I cannot hold him."

The groom did as he was bid, and in another moment Mr. Mackenzie's strong arms had taken forcible hold of Robin, still clinging to the branch of the pear-tree, and dropped him into the groom's outstretched arms.

There was silence in the little knot of servants who had watched the rescue of the boy, and not a word was spoken till Mr. Mackenzie had, with his hand on Robin's shoulder, marched him off to the front of the house.

Now all danger was passed, Robin began to try to get free of the tutor's hold, but it was in vain, and as the two figures disappeared round the corner of the house, several voices said—

"That young gent has got his match."

"And a good thing too. He's a young Turk, if I'm not mistaken," said the coachman, who had just arrived on the scene at as quick a pace as his short fat legs could achieve, breathing heavily with asthmatic wheezes between every word. "That pony was all of a lather when he galloped into the stable-yard. It's a wonder Sam caught the bridle; if he hadn't, the young gent would have been dashed against the wall and broke his head, most like. Them Scotch ponies are regular little furies when their spirit's up."

Theodore listened to all this conversation with interest, and was turning to follow the tutor and his refractory pupil into the house, when Mrs. Longhurst said—

"You had better not go and meddle, my dear. Don't make that boy your enemy."

"My enemy!" Theodore repeated. "What do you mean, Nurse?"

"I mean what I say. He is a naughty boy, and the sooner he is packed off the better."

Theodore went rather sorrowfully to the school-room, and opening his books, once more tried to fix his attention on his lessons. But it was no use trying. His thoughts went running over Robin's mad gallop, Master Martin's wounded

head, the long waiting on the road, and finally Robin hanging on the old pear-tree.

Presently, Mr. Mackenzie came into the room, and said kindly—

"My poor little lad, you have had a sorry time of it to-day, but we'll get on better now. Would you like to come and show me Master Martin's house, and find out whether he is much hurt?"

"Oh, I shall like that, sir," Theodore said; "only I am not sure whether Master Martin will let you go into his house, and I am not sure whether you could stand up in it, if you did get in."

"Then I shall have to send you first or creep in on all fours."

"That would be fun," Theodore exclaimed; "but, sir, I hope you are not very angry with Robin, and won't pack him off, as Nurse says you should."

"No, I have put him on his trial for another week; he never had any one before to master him, and so all allowance must be made for him. I am in hopes I shall lick him into shape."

Theodore's eyes opened very wide.

"What does that mean, sir?"

"It's a process you don't want at present, my boy. If ever you do want it, you will understand

what it means. I ought to go to Knapton to see which of the two boys is to come to look after Donald, but that will be too far for you to walk. So, when I have seen Master Martin, I will leave you to run home by yourself and go on to Knapton."

"Oh, Master Martin's cottage is not far. We just turn out of our gates and then in at a little gate, and through a field, and then on the moor there is Master Martin's house. I'll soon show you the way, sir."

"All right!" Mr. Mackenzie said. "Now then, get your cap and we'll start."

Theodore had lost all shyness with his tutor by this time, and he chattered of many things as he walked by his side.

"I should so like you to choose the boy, sir, to come and live here whose mother was so kind to me when I fell into the pool trying to get pin-patches—periwinkles, I mean. Grannie says pin-patch is a vulgar name."

Mr. Mackenzie laughed.

"It's a word I never heard of, my lad," he said; "what does it mean?"

"I will show you if we have periwinkles for tea. They have a little round thing over the door of their house—the shell, you know, and

Mrs. Longhurst takes a pin to pick it off and get the fish out of the shell."

"Oh," Mr. Mackenzie said, "I understand. The little round thing is the patch, and the pin is the best weapon to get it off."

Theodore was delighted at this appreciative reply, and that the tutor did not call the name "pin-patch" vulgar, and tell him not to use it.

When they reached the moor Theodore said—

"Stop, sir. Try if you can find the house—Master Martin's little house. It's that humpy thing just where the moor sinks down behind the furze-bushes. Come nearer, then you will see it. Isn't it wonderful that Master Martin made it himself, and that no one ever thought of going to see him. The boys down in the village make fun of him, and no one is kind to him; that is why I like to be kind to him," Theodore said.

"An excellent reason," Mr. Mackenzie replied. "But here we are. I suppose it looks very like a beaver's hut, or the home of an ancient Briton."

Theodore took the rope off the point of the paling, and went softly up to the door. It was just ajar, and he peeped in, saying—

"Master Martin, I've come to know if your

head aches after the fall, and I've brought my tutor to see you."

Master Martin now appeared at the door. The handkerchief was still bound round his head, and added to his strange appearance as he stood just within the shadow of the low doorway, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"Good afternoon," Mr. Mackenzie said. "Sir Theodore has come to inquire for you. I am going to walk into Knapton, and I will get you something to put on your wound, if you will let me look at it.

"Get out!" was the reply. "I want none of your physic. You'd best leave me alone."

"Very well; but it strikes me you might be more civil to this little friend of yours."

"Friend! I've got no friend that I knows of. I've plenty of enemies. Leave me alone, will 'ee?"

Mr. Mackenzie turned to pass through the opening between the sticks again, but Theodore lingered.

"I should like to stay a little while, sir. May I? I am so near home. Do let me."

"Very well; but I don't think it will be much use. Five minutes, Theodore, not any longer."

"I can guess five minutes, sir, and I will mind not to stay longer."

And then once more Theodore was alone with Master Martin. He had no sweet cake as a peace-offering this time, and he stood irresolute, not knowing how to make advances.

"Who is yon gent?" Master Martin asked.

"My tutor; he is so jolly and nice. He is just as sorry for you as I am."

"Humph! Is he?"

"Yes. You know you told me you liked to see me. That is why I came again, and I thought you might like to see my tutor as well. I learned such a pretty verse to-day in my daily text-book. If you sit down on your bench I will repeat it to you."

Master Martin flopped down on his rough seat and tucked his crooked legs under him.

"Go on," he said.

And Theodore, standing in the westering light, which made a halo of glory of his golden hair, repeated in slow, child-like tones these words—"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you."

CHAPTER IX

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

"THAT'S all very fine!" Master Martin said; "and I'd like to know who ever loved an enemy, eh?"

Theodore was rather at a loss.

"I daresay it would be hard to do it, but we might try," he said. "You see," he went on, "I don't quite know how I should feel, because I've not got an enemy; but I might *try* to love him if I had one."

"Well, suppose you did; what then?"

"Then after a long time he might love me, and be my friend instead of my enemy."

"A likely matter!" and Master Martin gave a little chuckling laugh, adding, "You are a queer little 'un—very queer."

Theodore had nothing to say to this; he did not understand why Master Martin thought him queer. He had often heard Mrs. Longhurst say the housekeeper had a "queer temper," and that

her ladyship—meaning his grandmother—had "queer fancies"; but he did not know how to apply the word to himself.

"I was only to stay five minutes," Theodore said after a pause, "and I must go now; but I will come again, if you please."

"If I please? Of course I please."

"Then you like to see me, Master Martin?" Theodore asked in a delighted voice.

Master Martin nodded.

"Then I will come again, and bring you some more cakes, and read you something out of one of my books. Shall I?"

Again a nod, but this time accompanied with the words, "I'll bet you'll never make an enemy, even in this wicked world."

"I hope not," Theodore said, as he ran away; his golden hair, which was doomed to fall under Mr. Short's scissors, gleaming for the last time in the sunshine, as he called out, "Good-bye! good-bye, Master Martin; I'll come again."

Master Martin watched the little figure till it was out of sight, and his thoughts went back to days long since past, when he was a little boy in a village far away by the sea in Devonshire.

Theodore's words had brought back that time; he could hear his mother's voice, he could re-

member how, when she lay dying, she spoke to him of God, and bid him strive to please Him and be a good boy. Then all that time seemed to fade away, and Master Martin remembered only his life in the house of an uncle, who had promised his mother to take care of him, but in whose house he had received nothing but unkindness and neglect.

Then he ran away and joined a travelling circus, and became an acrobat, twisting his limbs and turning somersaults at every country fair in the part of England where the circus travelled all through the early spring, summer, and autumn months.

So he had earned a living, till one day, when the show was at Norwich for Tombland Fair, he had fallen from a trapeze, and had so injured his back that his growth was stunted and his legs shrivelled up under him.

Master Martin had been discharged from the hospital crippled for the rest of his life. This was years ago, and ever since he had lived as he could, picking up odd jobs in the country towns of Norfolk.

At the seaport town of Yarmouth he had learned to make the fishermen's nets and the rough baskets, which craft had been taught him

by a kindly woman who had pitied his forlorn condition, and had been perhaps the only person, except little Theodore, who had befriended him. For, as we know, Master Martin's manners, as well as his appearance, were not engaging; and when his old friend at Yarmouth died, he left the town and wandered along the coast till he came to Knapton. In a dip of the moorland Master Martin had built his curious hut, which escaped observation from its position, and as Theodore said, looked like a hump in the heather when it was seen by any chance passer-by.

It was strange how the presence of the little golden-haired boy had sent Master Martin's thoughts back into the far past of his childhood, when his mother called him "her little Marty," and smoothed his hair with her feeble hands, and spoke to him of God and His love.

I do not know how it was that the chord of long-past memories was touched by Theodore's hand, but when Master Martin lay down that night in the corner of his hut to sleep, he dreamed of his mother, and heard her voice saying, "Be a good boy, Marty; be a good boy."

How often the words of a good mother come back over the waste of years, and, scarcely heeded when first spoken, become as a message from the

dead, and awaken repentance and longing to amend, in the man's heart!

Mrs. Press was busy with her washing that bright spring afternoon, when she was a little flustered by seeing a tall young gentleman standing at the door.

"Does Mrs. Press live here?"

"Yes, sir," Mrs. Press said, hastily wiping the soapsuds from her hands with her apron, and coming forward with a very red face, nervously untying the strings of the apron and throwing it behind her. "Yes, sir, I am Mrs. Press, if you please. I am sorry I am so untidy; you must please to excuse it. I was washing a few fine things for the lady at the vicarage—wanted in a hurry—but I am not often so out of sorts in the afternoon."

"All right," Mr. Mackenzie said. "I am sorry I came at an inconvenient time of day, but I wanted to see your boy, who wishes to get the place at the Hall. I hear a good character of him from the schoolmaster, whom I have just seen. I only fear, from what he says, that the boy is not strong enough for the place."

"My boy is small, sir, and not so tall as some others, but he is strong and willing," Mrs. Press

said. "We all have our faults, sir, but I will say a better boy than my Jack never lived. Since his poor father was lost he has done all he could for me. Some folks say he should be put to the fishing trade, but I have got that horror of the sea since my poor husband left me, never to come back, that I feel as though I could not bear to see him put off in a boat."

"Well," Mr. Mackenzie replied kindly, "I can understand what you feel, and I will engage your boy to come up to-morrow morning to the Hall, and give him a week's trial."

"Thank you, sir, kindly," Mrs. Press said. "I am sure my Jack will do his best, and I am more thankful than I can say, to get him a good place."

"He is to have five shillings a week and his board, and to come by seven o'clock every morning and make himself, as the advertisements say, 'generally useful.' Good afternoon."

When Mr. Mackenzie was gone, Mrs. Press returned to her wash-tub, telling herself that she never saw a nicer gentleman, and that he was quite like a friend—such a smile as he had, and such a happy way with him. "Oh, my boy is fortunate, and the words I have prayed in church every Sunday for the widow and fatherless have been answered—that they have."

It was with a light heart that Mrs. Press finished her work, hung the things out to dry, and then tidied up her kitchen and herself, and got tea ready.

Jack was late in coming home; he had been an errand to Cromer for her, for she had fallen short of starch, and it would be wanted the next day for the fine lace and handkerchiefs about which the Vicar's sister was so particular.

The tea had been brewing on the hob some time, and the potatoes boiled till they had to be taken off the fire, and still Jack did not come.

Mrs. Press went to the door and looked out; she had to go to the top of the sandbank, covered with long grass before the cottage, before she could see the length of the irregular road where the cottages stood, to the turn leading it by the weather-beaten church and vicarage and the school-house.

Again and again did Mrs. Press take up her position, with her hands shading her eyes from the bright western sunshine which sent slanting rays across the road, and still Jack did not come.

She had often, in days past, stood on this point of observation, looking seaward with anxious eyes; now she had turned her back to the sea

and was straining her eyes towards the Cromer road.

Presently she heard a voice calling to her. "What's up, Mrs. Press, eh?"

"I was watching for my Jack, that's all."

"He'll be back fast enough. I wouldn't worrit about him. He's such a wonderful good boy, you know."

This was said with a little mocking laugh.

Mrs. Press came down from the sandbank and replied, "Yes, you are right there; my boy never gives me any trouble."

"And you've got him taken on at the Hall, I find."

"Who told you as much?"

"Why, the gentleman himself, who has been poking about here and asking for my Ted's character at the school."

"Well, where's the harm of that?" Mrs. Press said; "he asked about my boy too."

"Well, I bet, if your Jack gets to the Hall, he won't stay there—a poor weak little mortal, who is a head shorter than he ought to be. There are some folks who say you've worked him too hard already, carrying them heavy washing-baskets, and they wonder a mother could make a slave of her boy, and kill him with work beyond his strength."

Poor Mrs. Press! She had managed to keep her temper up to this point, but now her indignation rose against the woman who had dared to say she had made a slave of Jack—Jack, who was dearer to her than all the world; Jack, for whose sake she had toiled, and of whom she was so proud.

"I tell you what, Mrs. Cross, you had better mind your own business and hold your tongue. I'll thank you to make yourself scarce, for your room is more welcome than your company."

Mrs. Cross had always a retort ready.

"I am sure I never want to darken your door," she said with a loud discordant laugh, as Mrs. Press went quickly to her cottage and took refuge there.

All her pleasure in Jack's success was for the time spoiled. She sat down and hot tears fell down her face, while she reproached herself for having indulged in angry words to Mrs. Cross. "I shouldn't have done it," she said to herself. "Jack would say so, I know. Make him my slave! kill him with hard work! Oh, it is too bad to hear such a thing; but there! who cares for Mrs. Cross? Every one knows what her tongue is. Poor thing, she has her troubles and they've soured her. Ted leads her a pretty life, and she

has no comfort in her girls, a flighty set who dress up in finery and——"

"Oh, my dear!" she said, springing up as the well-known footsteps were heard and Jack appeared. "How late you are. I've been in such a fidget."

"And crying, mother. Now what is that about?"

"Never mind; you've got the place at the Hall all right,—five shillings a week and your board. But what have you done to your face? There's a great bruise on it as big as a plover's egg, and another on your forehead. What have you done to yourself?"

Jack did not answer for a minute. He put the basket on the table with the little purchases, felt in his pocket for the change out of the shilling his mother had given him, and laid threepence by the basket. Then he said—

"That's the change all right, and I've not forgot anything."

"But, Jack, your face! I must get some vinegar to put on the bruises. Have you been fighting? I hope not."

"Look here, mother. You aren't to ask any questions, for I shan't answer them. As to the bruises, they will soon get well, and ain't of no

consequence; so let's have tea, for I'm very hungry and thirsty too."

"But aren't you glad you are to go to the Hall and look after the pony, and see that dear little gentleman every day?"

"Yes; of course I'm glad."

"Did you know the gentleman had been to engage you before I told you?"

"Yes, I heard it as I was coming along home."

"Who ever told you?"

"Ted Cross."

"And you and he had a fight! O Jack!"

CHAPTER X

A NEW BROOM

JACK PRESS arrived at the Hall in good time the next morning, and was looked at rather suspiciously by the coachman, who said—

"Fighting, eh? That won't do here, youngster. Why, you've an eye as black as coal! How did it happen?"

"I'd rather not say, sir."

The coachman at the Hall was a very grand person in Jack's eyes, and he treated him with due respect.

"Rather not say? Well, when I ask a question I expect it to be answered. Do you hear? I am afraid you are a quarrelsome boy, and, as I said before, that won't suit me. Come, look alive and swill out the pony's stall, and then I'll teach you how to rub him down, and give you a job in the harness-room. What little hands you've got! I'm afraid you won't suit the place, that I am."

This was very discouraging, and poor Jack's

head ached, and his eyelid was so swollen that he could scarcely see.

"I'll do my best to learn, sir, what you teach me."

"Well, go and fill that bucket at the pump, and take that broom and swill out the stall.

And then the coachman stumped off to a very good breakfast with the groom, and left poor Jack feeling very ignorant and very disconsolate.

However, he pumped away till the bucket was full, and then opened the stable door and looked with awe at the two big carriage-horses, who turned their heads at his entrance, kicked out a hind-leg, and then took no further notice of him. The pony was in a smaller stable, leading out of the larger one, and Jack went up to Donald and tried to stroke him; but Donald whisked his long tail and declined any further advances, then kicked his foot against the stall and pulled hard at the halter which was fastened to it.

Jack took the broom and began to wash the stone paving, and worked at it with a will, and then went into the yard again to wait for further orders. He was very hungry, for it was a long run from Knapton, and the smell of fried bacon from the coachman's house adjoining the stable was very appetising. He wished his head did

not throb so much. He sat down on a horse-block, and he began to think the coveted place, to look after Sir Theodore's pony and attend him when he rode out on it, was not so delightful as he had expected.

It seemed a long time before any one came into the yard. A large sandy cat crept along in the sunshine and made a futile spring at one of the fantail pigeons, which had come down from the dovecot expecting its breakfast.

The big mastiff, Juno, came out of her kennel as far as her chain would allow her, shook herself, took in the appearance of the stranger, gave a low, short bark, and then lay down with her nose on her paws, keeping an eye upon Jack all the time.

Presently there was the welcome sound of footsteps and a childish voice, "Is the new boy come?" and Sir Theodore ran into the yard.

Jack rose and said respectfully—

"Yes, sir, I'm the boy who is come to look after the pony."

Theodore looked anxiously and rather curiously at Jack's bruised and swollen eye, but, unlike the coachman, he did not make a remark on it at first.

Robin Prescott, who now followed Theodore into the yard, was not so reticent.

"Why, you've got a black eye! How was that? Fighting, I suppose."

"If you please, sir, I do not wish to talk about it. It will soon be well, and I can see to do my work."

"I am afraid it must hurt you dreadfully. I will go and ask Nana—Longhurst, I mean, for I am not to call her Nana now—for some friar's balsam."

Sir Theodore was running off to the house, when the coachman called Jack to come and get a bit of breakfast.

"What are you idling there for?"

"I did not know what to do next, sir."

"You'll know fast enough when you see your bread and butter before you. Come, look alive; no loitering here."

This was the beginning of the much-coveted service at the Hall, and Jack began to wish Ted Cross had been chosen instead of him. It had made him a bitter enemy. After all, he thought it was not worth while, and he felt ready to cry instead of eating his breakfast. Every mouthful seemed to choke him.

Mr. Short arrived soon after nine o'clock with a black bag and an air of great importance.

The operation was to take place in the old

nursery, and Longhurst had made the necessary preparations with a heavy heart.

Sir Theodore seated himself on the high nursery-chair, and Mr. Short pinned a sheet round his little figure with a great deal of flourish.

"Quite comfortable, sir?"

"Yes, thank you."

And then out came the big scissors and a comb, and one by one the heavy golden locks fell on the sheet which was prepared to receive them.

Longhurst turned away her head; she could not bear to see the devastation made by Mr. Short's sharp scissors.

"Quite short, sir?"

"Yes, please," Sir Theodore said. "Make me look like a boy. You know I looked like a girl with my hair so long."

"It's beautiful 'air. Many a lady would be proud of it. It's got a wonderful curl, too."

"Yes," Longhurst sighed, "and all quite natural."

When Sir Theodore got down from his elevation on the stool and went to the glass, he laughed and said—

"I do look a funny little boy. Master Martin wouldn't know me, and Mrs. Curtis would not

call me like 'Bubbles' now. But I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Short, for turning me into a boy."

"You must have a silk handkerchief round your neck, my dear, or you'll get a stiff neck."

"Oh, please not, Nurse, *please!* Robin will laugh at me, and Mr. Mackenzie says I want hardening."

But Longhurst was determined, and a blue silk handkerchief was tied round the slender little throat, and knotted in front in a sailor's bow.

When Sir Theodore had run away to his lessons, Longhurst gathered up the precious curls and folded them in tissue paper, each curl in a separate fold, and the whole carefully wrapped up in thicker paper and put away in a box. "It's just as if he were dead," his faithful friend said. "I don't know how to bear it."

With the shearing of Sir Theodore's golden locks a new era dawned for him. The feeling of independence and being like other boys, and no longer the fear of being laughed at for being like a girl, gave him a proud sense of equality with Robin Prescott.

A change had also come over him. For the first time in his life he had felt he had a master in Mr. Mackenzie, and having, after the first

week, found resistance to his authority was useless, he had made no further attempt to set him at defiance.

To all outward appearances Robin was very much improved, though Mr. Mackenzie kept a watchful eye on him, and did not feel that perfect confidence in him which he did in Theodore. It was as Mrs. Longhurst said, "You had to put on spectacles to find out his faults, for he was as good as gold."

The two boys took long expeditions with Donald. Jack had settled into his place, and bore out the good character which had been given him, and won favour with the coachman and groom, as he saved them much of their work, and did theirs and his own also without grumbling.

"A willing boy" was the coachman's opinion of Jack, expressed to Mrs. Longhurst when she came sometimes into the stable-yard to see the boys start for their ride.

Blackberry-time had come, and there are never any blackberries to equal those which are gathered in Norfolk lanes. So large and juicy, and growing in such profusion and large clusters on the topmost branches of the brambles.

One lovely September afternoon Sir Theodore and Robin went into the stable-yard as usual to

tell Jack to saddle Donald, when they found he had cast a shoe, and that there could be no ride till Jack had taken him to the blacksmith's at Knapton.

"Never mind," Robin said; "let us ask Mr. Mackenzie to let us go and pick blackberries by ourselves. We can get plenty in the lane leading down to Sherringham."

The two boys raced off, to find their tutor in the schoolroom talking to Mr. Harrison, who had just arrived from Norwich.

Mr. Harrison gave each of the boys a nod and said—

"Well, how are you getting on, and how often has Mr. Mackenzie had to birch you since I was here last?"

"We are never birched, sir," Sir Theodore said seriously, "never."

"Ah! I must see about that," Mr. Harrison said. "I'm afraid Mr. Mackenzie is not half strict enough."

"He is not strict, sir; he is awfully kind."

Robin gave Theodore a nudge with his elbow, and whispered, "Speak up, and ask if we may go."

"Please, sir, Donald has cast a shoe. May we two go alone and get blackberries in the Sherringham Lane? I promised Master Martin I

would pick him a lot, for he can't reach up to gather any for himself."

"Shut up," Robin whispered again.

"Well, I will let you go on one condition—that by Robin's watch you are back again here by half-past four; that gives you two hours."

"Of course we shall be back by then, sir."

"Well, be off then, and mind you get enough blackberries to make a pie for me," Mr. Mackenzie said.

When the boys were gone, Mr. Harrison said—

"You have done wonders with those boys, Mackenzie. I don't think any one who had the care of Prescott before ever dared trust him to do as he was bid."

"You see, I do trust him, and that's the secret of making him trustworthy."

"Ah! you may make that answer, but I have known it fail. What a quaint little fellow Sir Theodore is. You have made a boy of him, and he will be fit to go to school in another year."

"I hope so; but he is not strong physically, and very sensitive, poor little fellow. He has been happy ever since the day he got rid of his curls, and has no longer the fear of being laughed at for being like a girl."

"Lady Chamberlayne seems perfectly satisfied

with your management of the boy, and I am sure that is a pretty feather for you."

The two boys were delighted to be trusted to go blackberrying by themselves.

They set off running, with the empty baskets slung over their shoulders—two big ones and a little one—the basket which Theodore had bought in the spring from Mrs. Curtis, and which had seen good service on the beach.

"All in this basket are for Master Martin," he said. "Do get me some very big ones for him, Rob."

"I'll see about it. I say, how hot it is! and there's a black cloud over there."

But they forgot the heat and the black cloud when they got into the lane, and big blackberries hung in tempting clusters at the top of the high hedge.

Presently a low mutter of thunder made Theodore say—

"That's thunder, Rob. I think we had better go home."

"Nonsense! I am not going if you are."

Theodore said no more, but a flash of lightning came full in his face.

"I don't like being out in a storm, Rob; do come. If we go across the common past Master

Martin's house, we shall soon get home. Oh, there's another flash! Please come."

"All right!" Robin said, letting himself down from the top of the bank. "Come on; through that gate; there's a path there."

Theodore struggled bravely on through the narrow footpaths between the furze-bushes, which scratched him and pricked him, and made him call out, "Stop, Rob, for me; I can't get on so fast."

A splash of rain now came against Theodore's face and a peal of thunder rolled overhead.

Robin shouted, "Make haste, make haste, Theo," and went on himself at a far quicker pace than his companion.

Presently the rain fell in a deluge, the storm closed in around them, and peal after peal of thunder sounded like volleys of cannon. Half blinded with rain and hail, Theodore lost the track and went blundering on, till suddenly he lost his footing and rolled down into one of those sudden dips in the moorland which come upon the unwary without any warning. Down the poor child rolled, till he found himself at the bottom of a steep incline, and for a minute was stunned by the fall.

CHAPTER XI

MASTER MARTIN'S SEARCH

FRIGHTENED and drenched to the skin, Theodore found himself carried up the steps of a van, and a woman's voice said, "Here, my pretty darling, let me take off your wet things, or you'll get your death of cold."

She then began to undress Theodore, though he said, "I would rather you did not take off all my things, please; and will you tell me where I am?"

He looked round and saw a little fire burning in the corner, and a quantity of tin pots and pans and skewers hanging up on the pegs round the house on wheels. Presently they began to shake and jingle, and then there was a sound of creaking and jolting, and a man's voice shouting while the rain still fell in torrents on the roof, and the thunder, although now distant, rolled continuously.

"Where am I going?" Theodore asked.

"I am taking of you home, if you'll tell me where you live?"

"I am Sir Theodore Chamberlayne, of Knapton Hall. It is quite near. It won't take you long to get there, though this van goes very slowly."

"Well, we can't move fast in weather like this. I'll give you a cup of tea and cover you with a blanket, and you'll get a nice nap."

Theodore's usual politeness made him drink the tea which was poured from a brown earthenware pot standing on the hob by the fire. It was very nasty, and though Theodore made desperate efforts, he could only take two or three gulps.

"Sup it down, my dearie—see, I'll put summut sweet in it," and the woman poured out of a little black bottle a few drops into the cup of tea. "There, taste again; its nicer now."

She held the cup to Theodore's lips, and he felt obliged to take another gulp. Then she laid him down on the mattress, covered him with a rug, and told him to lie quiet while she dried his things, and by that time he would be at home.

Theodore began to be very sleepy, and though he tried hard to keep his eyes open, the lids would insist on dropping over them, and very soon he was wrapped in a deep slumber.

Meanwhile there was great anxiety at the Hall

about the two little boys. Mr. Mackenzie watched at the hall-door for some time, expecting to see them return every minute, while poor Longhurst walked up and down in great distress, shielding her eyes from the lightning, and putting her hands over her ears as the thunder rolled overhead.

"Such a storm, and what hail!" she exclaimed. "O sir, what shall we do?"

Mr. Mackenzie did not answer. He took an overcoat from the stand in the hall, pulled a cap over his eyes, and went out into the pouring rain.

"They can't be far off," he thought, "if they only went to Sherringham Lane; and I know Theodore would do as I bid him, unless the other boy persuaded him to go farther."

Unmindful of the raging storm, Mr. Mackenzie strode along the avenue, and just at the gate met Robin, who was scared by the lightning, and said as he scampered past, "Theodore is behind, sir; he can't be far off."

"Stop!" Mr. Mackenzie said, with quick strides overtaking Robin. "What do you mean by leaving Sir Theodore? Where is he?"

"He—he—can't be far off. I came across the moor, and shouted to him to follow—Oh!" as

another ray of vivid lightning flashed across the avenue, and cast a lurid light on the boy's hot face.

"Well, run on, and I must look for Sir Theodore."

Though half-blinded by hail, and drenched with the deluge of rain which fell as it ceased, Mr. Mackenzie pushed on, hoping every minute to meet Theodore. Suddenly a thought struck him, "He is sheltering in Master Martin's cottage."

So he turned towards the well-known path to the old man's hut, instead of making for Sherringham Lane. Master Martin was crouching in a remote corner of his little dark abode when Mr. Mackenzie took the palings at one bound, and shouted, "Is any one here?"

There was no answer, and pushing open the door and stooping—or his head would have been struck by the low roof—he marched into the hut.

"Get out!" Master Martin said. "What do you mean by coming in like that?"

"I mean this, has Sir Theodore Chamberlayne been here?—*is* he here?"

"No, he ain't."

"We have lost him; he must be out in this storm."

"Out in this storm?" Master Martin said, his

tone changing to one of real concern. "Lor, how's that?"

"I cannot imagine what has become of him. I must go on and try to find him."

"Lost! lost! pretty creature!" Master Martin said. "He'll be struck with lightning; he'll be blinded; he'll be killed p'raps, and then—why then, I shall never live long after him."

Mr. Mackenzie did not wait to hear more than the first exclamations of distress. He pushed on, and at the turn of Sherringham Lane he met Jack galloping home from Knapton on Donald's back.

"Stop!" Mr. Mackenzie shouted.

Jack pulled up Donald, who, being near home, resented it, and did his best to unseat Jack.

"Ride him to the stables," Mr. Mackenzie said, "and come back to Sherringham Lane. Sir Theodore is lost."

Jack obeyed instantly, and in a very short time had joined Mr. Mackenzie.

Neither Jack nor the tutor said much.

The storm was abating, but the rain still fell heavily. In Sherringham Lane there was no trace of Theodore, except that in one place there was a quantity of blackberries scattered on the grass under the hedge. Presently Jack said—

"There is a path through the furze across the moor, sir. Perhaps they went that way. It would be a short cut to the Hall, shorter than by the road."

Mr. Mackenzie caught at the idea, and he was soon striding along the narrow track between the furze-bushes, and looking right and left for some sign of the lost child.

They came to the dip in the moor where poor little Theodore had rolled down, and here Mr. Mackenzie heard a shout from Jack.

"Here, sir! here is the little basket he always took about with him; it's all stained with blackberries; they must have been this way."

Mr. Mackenzie was eagerly looking down into the hollow, and said—

"It looks as if a gipsy's van had been down there. There is the mark of wheels—and look, here's an old tin saucepan."

"There's often gipsies and tramps, sir, about in these hollows, but I've not seen one of late, for the vans are all going into the towns now. But I remember, sir, we did meet one yesterday, when we were out with Donald on the Knapton road, and the woman hallooed at us to tell our fortunes."

Mr. Mackenzie had sprung down into the

hollow, and was looking at the marks the wheels had left, and the print of the horse's hoofs.

"They are quite fresh," he said, "the van must have been here to-day. We must try to find out. Sir Theodore's basket shows the boys came this way. I must go to the police-station at Sherringham, and search must be made all over the neighbourhood. So, back to the Hall, Jack, and ask Master Prescott if he saw a gipsy's van on the moor."

"Yes, sir," Jack said, and he was off again, looking right and left as he went, in the hope of seeing some trace of Sir Theodore, half hoping that when he reached the Hall he should find Sir Theodore safely at home.

But by poor Longhurst's face, as she stood at the door, a face of utter distress and despair, he knew the lost child had not returned.

Poor Nurse scolded Robin and wept by turns.

"You should never have left the child and run home without him. You, a big boy, and my darling only a delicate little child."

Robin stood still in his wet clothes, and suddenly Longhurst snatched hold of him, drove him upstairs, saying she did not want to have him to nurse with inflammation of the lungs, and insisted on his changing his wet suit and stockings.

"I didn't leave him," he repeated. "I thought he was following me. It was not my fault."

This was too much for Longhurst. She shook Robin violently, saying—

"Whose fault was it, then, I should like to know?" and returned to her watch in the hall, where all the servants were collected.

So far the news had been kept from Lady Chamberlayne. She was always very much upset in a thunder-storm, and her maid was with her in her morning-room, doing her best to quiet her nerves by smelling-salts and doses of a sedative medicine, which had the effect of sending her at last into a doze.

To keep the terrible anxiety of the household from Sir Theodore's grandmother was the aim of every one concerned, and if he came back, she never need know that he had been lost.

Jack and the groom and the gardener all set out to scour the country, and to examine every little hollow and uneven place in the moor.

The short autumn day closed in, and still there was no news of Sir Theodore.

In his search Jack came upon Master Martin, who took very little heed of him, but murmured to himself more than to Jack—

"I am seeking for the child—the pretty child

—I'll seek till I find him." Then he trudged away over the moor, calling, in his thin, querulous voice, "Where are you, my little dear? where are you? Poor old Martin is well-nigh broken-hearted about you; where are you?"

There was no answer in the gathering twilight except the distant boom of the waves on Knapton beach, and the mutter of the thunder as the storm ceased, and a dull, sullen calm followed it.

Master Martin trudged on; he never thought of fatigue, or how his little crooked legs ached, nor how his bent back seemed ready to break. On and on he went. Once he came upon Mr. Mackenzie and the policeman—once upon the groom and gardener.

"Whatever are you about here, Master Martin?" the gardener asked him. And still it was the same answer—

"I am seeking the lost child."

"You'll be lost yourself as night comes on; you had best go back to your hut, Master Martin."

"You mind your own business. I'm seeking the child—the dear, pretty child!"

"Poor old chap! he is quite doity; he ain't likely to find Sir Theodore."

Master Martin never faltered in his search; he walked on, and as the twilight faded and the night closed in, he still persisted in his search. He was in a lane now leading off in the direction of Aylsham—a deep, dark lane with high hedges on either side.

Suddenly he came to a stop; right before him he saw a light—a tiny flickering light—which came from a dark object just in front of him. He crept cautiously on by the hedge, and getting closer to the light, saw it came from a van. A lurcher dog chained beneath it gave a low growl, and a horse tethered to a gate by which he was lying snorted and made a sudden movement. Presently the door of the van opened and a woman's head was thrust out, but she closed it again immediately, though not before Master Martin had heard a child's low, sad cry. His ears were sharp, and he squatted down as close to the van as he dared go, and listened! But the crying ceased, the light which had shone through the little opening of the window flickered and went out.

Master Martin knew very well what the life of houses on wheels was. He had, as we know, passed his boyhood in a show, and by a fall from a trapeze had so injured himself that his poor

distorted figure was the result. He knew that the inhabitants of vans generally slept soundly after heavy suppers, washed down by rum and gin, and he felt that if that cry of childish distress was, as he half believed, Sir Theodore's, he had found him!

He was too utterly exhausted to move for some time, but he crawled as close to the van as he dared, and listened intently.

Loud snores soon told that the occupants were asleep, and then a little voice fell on his ear, "Oh, I do want to go home; please, dear Heavenly Father, send some one to take me home—pray, please do?"

Yes, there could be no doubt now that the voice was Sir Theodore's. "So I have found him—I have found him, and they that have sought him high and low have never found him. I—poor old Martin—have found the lost child!" But how to get him out was the puzzle.

The stars looked down from the dark blue sky on the poor old man with loving eyes, and they seemed to inspire him with courage and hope. He crept to the top step of the van, and putting his mouth close to the door he whispered, "Are you here, my pretty boy, 'cause I've come to find you. I'm old Martin."

Master Martin's heart beat loud with anxious hope and fear waiting for an answer. Then there was a gentle rustle inside, and the sweet voice whispered, though nearly choked wtih sobs—

"Yes, yes, Master Martin, I'm here."

CHAPTER XII

RESTORED

"OPEN the door, my pretty one—gently, now!"

"I am afraid; she'll wake perhaps."

Master Martin paused and listened. "Not she, not she—she's sound with drink; lift the latch, my dear—lift the latch."

With trembling fingers Sir Theodore obeyed. The door opened a very little way, then farther, and the child crept through, and down the steps with his bare feet, to feel his hand was clasped in Master Martin's.

"Don't 'ee speak, but come along. I knows the way."

Poor little Theodore pattered along through mud and mire, holding fast to Master Martin's hand. His clothes had all been taken off, and he was in the ragged blue shirt in which he had been dressed before he went into that long dreamy sleep. He was shivering with cold, and his teeth chattered in his head, but he kept

bravely on as Master Martin trudged along murmuring to himself, "I've found him; I've found him, thank God."

When they had gone for more than two miles in this way, the dawn began to break; the morning star shining in the eastern sky had inspired the poor little wayfarer with hope.

"Look, look, Master Martin, there's the bright morning star. I've learned a verse about it in my little text-book Nana gave me—Oh dear! oh dear! and with the name of his old friend the long pent-up tears broke forth.

"O Master Martin, I can't help it. I must cry just a little. You are so kind—but—but I can't help it."

"No, no, my pretty one, you can't help it. Lor, I've taken a wrong turn, and we are going into Knapton."

Yes, they were just at the entrance of the village, and now in the strengthening light they saw another van drawn aside in an open bit of common where a flock of geese showed like white spectres, and, startled from his slumbers, the gander began to hiss and flap his wings, and utter notes of warning to his wife and children. The cackling and fluster among the geese awoke the inhabitants of this house on wheels. The

door opened, and a head in a large nightcap, as white as the wings of the gander as he flapped them and ga-gaed angrily, was thrust out.

"Who is there?" a voice asked—a pleasant, cheery voice, which made Master Martin give a little cry of joy.

"Oh, lor, if it isn't Mrs. Curtis. Hi! Mrs. Curtis, hi!"

"Is that you, Master Martin. Whatever are you about at this time in the morning?"

Who shall tell the surprise of Mrs. Curtis as a little shivering figure climbed up the steps of the van, and said, "Oh, Mrs. Broome, Mrs. Broome, take me in. I am so cold, and so—so—tired;" and then Theodore was clasped in Mrs. Curtis's arms, and pressed close to her warm capacious breast, where a true and tender womanly heart beat with mingled sorrow and gladness.

Mrs. Curtis hastily awoke her husband, and bid him dress himself and run an errand as fast as his legs could carry him to the Hall. Mr. Curtis was very droswy, and did not hurry himself, while his wife kindled the fire in the little stove, and wrapped poor shivering Theodore in a blanket, and tucked him up in the large chair where Mrs. Curtis was wont to take a nap when there was no business going on as the van rumbled through unfrequented lanes and by-ways.

Mrs. Curtis saw it was useless to question the poor, tired child, whose courage had quite broken down, and he continued to sob bitterly from cold and fatigue. Mrs. Curtis went to a cupboard and took out a large tin box, which she unlocked, and brushing away some sprigs of lavender, she shook out a little old-fashioned frock and jacket of blue merino, and kissing it, said, "He shall have my Bertie's frock, that he shall, and his socks and bootikins, and all his clothes, which I never thought to see put on any child again."

A few quiet tears rolled down Mrs. Curtis's rosy cheeks as she turned a chair to the fire, and hung the little old garments there to be aired.

At this moment Mr. Curtis came out of the little bedroom, which was partitioned from the other by a screen covered with paper. "Bubbles" swung up and down as Mr. Curtis, not in a very serene temper, closed the rickety door, and said—

"Now you've got me up, what am I to do?"

"Don't be stupid, Tim. Run to the Hall and say Sir Theodore is safe here, and that Master Martin brought him. By-the-bye, where is Master Martin?"

The name roused Theodore from an uneasy doze, and he said—

"I want to see Master Martin, please. He got me away from those wicked people who took off all my things—and—and——"

"Who were they, my pretty one?"

"I don't know. It was a little house like yours, Mrs. Broome, but oh! so nasty and dirty, and——"

Mrs. Curtis slapped her hand on the table with such vehemence that the work-basket full of Tim's stockings to be mended turned over, and the contents rolled on the floor in every direction.

"It was these rascally gipsy tramps. I see it now! I see it now! They stole this precious child to get a reward. The police must be told — but for any sake, Tim, don't stand staring there, but stir your stumps for once, can't you?"

Mr. Curtis departed at last, a somewhat unwilling messenger, and then Mrs. Curtis put a little kettle on the fire, and prepared some tea for Theodore.

His shivering was followed by burning heat, and he said he had a bad pain in his head. He roused himself to some extent when Mrs. Curtis proceeded to dress him in the little garments,

which had been lying useless for so many years. A quaint little figure Sir Theodore looked when his toilet was complete, and he was for the time amused with the low-cut frock and short sleeves of the blue merino. The jacket was rather small for him, but it was fastened with big pearl buttons, and a silk handkerchief was tied round his neck to hide deficiencies.

Meanwhile Bubbles, at the door, continued his contemplation of the soap-bubbles, his sweet baby-face, under its shadowing curls, presenting a resemblance to those of the little boy, whose cheeks were crimson and his blue eyes unnaturally bright.

"You are the living picture of my Bertie—my Bubbles—my lost darling," Mrs. Curtis said, when she had finished dressing Sir Theodore, and, taking him on her lap, she crooned over him with maternal tenderness. Then she placed him once more in the chair, and disappeared to make herself, as she said, "decent" before the gentry arrived.

"Where is Master Martin? I want Master Martin—he was so kind to me."

Ah! where was Master Martin? Assured of the child's safety, he waited for no words of thanks, but set off to the Hall, to carry the

IN THE HOUSE ON WHEELS.—*Page* 134.

glad news to those who had passed a night of watching and distress.

Love quickened those poor, little, crooked legs to get over the ground, and Master Martin plodded wearily on, murmuring to himself as he went—

"He is safe—he is safe—the pretty, innocent child! If he had been stolen by them folks it might have been my story over again. Well, well—I've found him—I've found him."

Mr. Mackenzie had just returned from another futile search, and had telegraphed to the chief-constable at Norwich, and to the stations at the intermediate towns, that Sir Theodore Chamberlayne was lost, and a large reward was offered to any one who could give information about him.

The doctor had been sent for in the night to Lady Chamberlayne, who was really ill with distress and anxiety, and he was talking to Mr. Mackenzie in the hall when a poor, misshapen little figure drew near along the drive.

Mr. Mackenzie hastened towards him—

"Have you news?—have you brought news?" he asked almost sharply, from the fear he had that the answer might be in the negative. "Speak! have you heard anything of Sir Theodore?"

But Master Martin trudged along without a word, passed Mr. Mackenzie, and entirely ignored the doctor's presence.

"I want the Nurse," he said. "She loved him."

Then he squatted down on the steps before the door, and buried his face in his hands, his elbows resting on his knees.

"Call Longhurst instantly," Mr. Mackenzie said; "this old man will not tell us what has happened."

Longhurst soon came, her eyes red with crying. She put her hand on Master Martin's shoulder, and said—

"Tell us what you know—tell us what you know."

Master Martin raised his head and answered—

"The gipsy tramps had got hold of him. I found him, and took him to Mrs. Curtis—she that has the basket-van. I came here to tell you the child is safe. Now I may go."

No persuasion availed. Master Martin raised himself with evident difficulty, and went off to his hut. He looked back once, stopped, and said—

"Give my love to the pretty child when he comes, and say old Martin loves him, and bids him good-bye. No, no; I won't stay here," he

said, as Mr. Mackenzie tried to stop him. "No, no; this is no place for the likes of me; no, no. I've found him, the pretty child; that's enough—that's enough."

It was a week afterwards that Longhurst went to Master Martin's hut.

"I've come to fetch you to see Sir Theodore, Master Martin. He does nothing but cry out for you. He is very ill; he has had a high fever, and he is now so weak; but he says he wants you. You must come."

"No. Tell him I can't come," was the reply, and the face turned up to Mrs. Longhurst was so haggard and pallid, and there was such a weird look in the big prominent eyes, that Mrs. Longhurst was frightened.

"Oh, do 'ee come!" she entreated, "for the child may die, and then how would you feel?"

"Die! die! It's I that's agoing to die, not the pretty, innocent child—not he!"

"But the doctors say he is so weak. So—oh! Master Martin, do 'ee come along with me. You'll be sorry if—if——" Longhurst could not finish the sentence.

The old man took his stick, nodded his head by way of assent, and tottered along by Long-

hurst's side. Once she put out her hand as if to steady him, but he drew away from her, and continued his uneven, faltering steps.

Longhurst considerately took him in by the kitchen entrance, and offered him a glass of wine.

"No, no; water, water!"

They gave him some water, and then he said—

"Show the way."

To get up the stairs was a long and painful business—Master Martin had to rest so many times. At last they were at the door of Theodore's room. Here Master Martin stopped.

"Turn 'em all out. Leave me alone with the child. Do you hear?"

"All but me; you won't mind me," Longhurst said.

"No, no; you love him—you love him. Nobody else, mind!"

Longhurst did as he wished. The hospital nurse, and the doctor and Mr. Mackenzie, all left the room when poor Master Martin tottered into it.

"O Master Martin, Master Martin!" Theodore said, "I did so wish to see you. Kiss me, Master Martin."

The old man stood gazing down at the child

with his large eyes turned up to him, and his little white hand stretched out to take his.

"You found me when I was lost, Master Martin; you have been ever so kind to me. I can't talk much. I feel as if—as if I were running uphill when I try; but I hope you'll kiss me, Master Martin, and—you are to have a nice cottage built for you. My Grannie says so—to show how grateful she is to you for finding me. She has promised, if I die, to do it."

Master Martin stood like one in a dream. All the better part of his nature, that had slumbered for years, and all the sweetness which had been, as it were, crushed out by harsh treatment and the cruel jests of those who laughed at his crooked legs and queer appearance, had awoke when Theodore had gone to him with a message of good-will and kindness.

He took the little hand in his, and covered it with kisses, murmuring—

"Die! you mustn't die, you dear little child. I'm going to die instead of you. Not you; not you. God will spare you and take me. I've been thinking of Him of late; and you made me think of Him. And I ain't afraid to die—no, no. He will forgive me and take me to heaven, won't He?"

"Yes, yes," Theodore said faintly, "for Christ's sake, for Christ's sake, Master Martin."

The child closed his eyes, and Longhurst coming to Master Martin, put her hand in his arm and led him away.

Two days later Longhurst went to the hut to tell Master Martin Sir Theodore was better, and the doctors said he would live and get well in time. She found the door shut. She opened it gently, and went in.

"Master Martin!" she said, "Master Martin! Sir Theodore sends you his love, and he is much better."

But Master Martin did not answer. He was sitting in his chair, with his head on his hands, and by his side, on the rickety table, a picture Theodore had given him, with other little gifts, all scattered round him as he sat—a shell-box, a little text-book, a comforter that Longhurst had knitted for him, and the picture in a neat black frame—the shepherd with the sheep, and under it was printed—

"*My sheep know My voice, and they follow Me.*"

Master Martin had heard the voice, and had followed, where those that come to Him are in no wise cast out.

Sir Theodore Chamberlayne is now a schoolboy, and full of life and spirit. But on his return with Robin Prescott for his holidays, one of his first visits is to the little graveyard by the sea, where a plain stone cross, at the head of a grassy mound, has this inscription—

IN MEMORY OF

MASTER MARTIN

ERECTED BY HIS FRIEND

SIR THEODORE CHAMBERLAYNE

OF KNAPTON HALL.

There could be no date of age, and no other name, for no one knew either. But there are many in the village who can tell the story of Master Martin's love for Sir Theodore, and of the softening influence which the child's pity and sympathy had upon the poor irascible old man, who had found in him a friend.

A pretty cottage now stands on the site of the little hut; and here, now her journeys hither and thither with baskets and brooms are over, Mrs. Curtis lives with her somewhat indolent husband.

"Bubbles" has a prominent place on the wall

above the mantel-shelf; and when Sir Theodore rushes in to pay his old friend a visit, she always repeats that he was the living image of her Bertie and of "Bubbles," especially when he was dressed in the old blue merino frock and jacket.

Mrs. Curtis takes in what she calls fine washing, and does needlework for Longhurst and the upper servants at the Hall, and is busy as a bee and as good-natured as ever. Perhaps that is why she is increasing in size as she increases in years, and sometimes finds her breath rather short as she walks up to the Hall!

Jack is now footman there, and has fully carried out the good character given him when he was taken on as attendant to the young gentlemen in their rides.

Mr. Mackenzie is one of the masters at the public school, for which he had successfully prepared Sir Theodore and Robin Prescott, and is very often at the Hall during the vacation.

A life of happiness and usefulness lies before Sir Theodore Chamberlayne. He has not lost the sympathy of his childhood for all that is sad and suffering and unattractive. The crippled and helpless and cross-grained like Master Martin will, if he fulfils the promise of his boyhood,

have reason to call him their best friend, and to thank him for awakening in them the longing and desire for better things.

And so we say good-bye to Sir Theodore Chamberlayne of Knapton Hall.

THE END

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